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Periods of European Literature

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THE ROMANTIC REVOLT

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THE ROMANTIC REVOLT

BY

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NEW YORK

CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS

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PREFACE.

THERE is little need of a formal preface to a book of this kind. And there are only three points which seem to call for explanation.

1. It will be observed that the chapter on Germany has been handled on a different plan from those on Britain and France. I have given little or no attention to the minor writers. I have confined myself almost entirely to a few great authors and to the Romantic school. I am well aware that such a plan is open to grave objections. I cannot but think, however, that, all things considered, it is a less evil than to hurry over authors whose work is so important and, as a *whole*, so little known in this country as that of Lessing and Herder, Kant, Schiller, and Goethe. And it is manifest that, in a limited space, it is impossible to give a full account of these writers and, at the same time, devote any considerable space to those of less importance.

2. The last chapter is not intended for anything more than a mere sketch. And I trust it may be judged accordingly. Here again limits of space were against me. And all that was left me was to attempt a bare indication of the course taken by the romantic movement in those countries which, for the moment, rather followed in the wake of others than contributed anything strikingly significant of their own. In this chapter I have been further hampered by my own shortcomings. My knowledge of Russian is unfortunately defective; of Czech, Polish, and Magyar I have no knowledge at all. In the three last cases I have been obliged to take my information at second hand. And in all four I have been confronted with the notorious difficulties of transliteration, which I cannot hope to have overcome.

3. Owing to the peculiar character of the period, more space has been given to matters of philosophy and of political theory than in the other volumes of the series. The importance of the work done by the German philosophers, and the deep influence which they had upon the literature of their country, may, I trust, be held to justify the course taken in the one case. The vast significance of the French Revolution, and the deep-reaching consequences of the theories which gave shape to it and sprang from it, seemed to call for special attention in the other.

It remains only to offer my sincerest thanks to those who have helped me by criticism and advice. I owe

much to my friend and former pupil, Mr T. W. Moles, who read my pages in manuscript and offered many valuable suggestions. The same kind service was performed by my colleagues, Dr Moorman, who read and amended the whole in proof, and Professor Smithells, who gave me some much-needed help at the end of Chapter I. To Professor Herford I do not know how to make my acknowledgments. The inexhaustible stores of his learning and critical judgment have been laid freely at my disposal; and I owe him a debt which I shall never be able to repay. The same applies to Professor Saintsbury, who has patiently helped me with advice and suggestions at every turn, and who has shown unfailing forbearance with delays which were vexatious to me and must have been doubly so to him. And there are others, now, alas! beyond the reach of thanks. Without the aid thus liberally given the following pages would have been still more imperfect than they are.

C. VAUGHAN.

LEEDS, *Jan.* 1907.

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THE ROMANTIC REVOLT.

CHAPTER I.

BRITAIN.

LIMITS OF THE PERIOD — CHARACTERISTICS OF ROMANCE — CONTRAST BETWEEN THIS AND THE PRECEDING PERIOD—THE PRECURSORS—THOMSON—GOLDSMITH AND OTHERS—MACPHERSON AND PERCY—THEIR INFLUENCE ON THE CONTINENT—THEIR TREATMENT OF THE SUPERNATURAL—THEIR RESEMBLANCE AND CONTRAST—APPARENT REACTION AGAINST ROMANCE — ENDED BY COWPER — HIS INNOVATIONS — HIS RELIGIOUS FERVOUR — INFLUENCE OF THE RELIGIOUS REVIVAL — 'THE TASK' — COWPER'S ATTITUDE TO NATURE — HIS HUMOUR AND LETTERS—THE PERSONAL STRAIN IN HIS POETRY—BURNS—HIS RELATION TO SCOTTISH WRITERS AND TO PERCY—HIS TREATMENT OF THE SUPERNATURAL—OF NATURE—OF MAN—HIS SATIRE — HIS SONGS — BLAKE — HIS POEMS OF CHILD LIFE — HIS VISIONARY SPIRIT—PICTORIAL ELEMENT IN HIS POETRY—ALLEGED CLASSICAL REVIVAL — CRABBE — HIS REALISM — HIS RELATION TO ROMANCE — ROGERS — CAMPBELL — 'LYRICAL BALLADS' — PREVIOUS POETRY OF COLERIDGE—INFLUENCE OF BOWLES—PREVIOUS POETRY OF WORDSWORTH — DESIGN OF 'LYRICAL BALLADS' — 'ANCIENT MARINER'—COLERIDGE'S OTHER POEMS — WORDSWORTH'S CONTRIBUTIONS — POEMS OF MAN — PASTORALS — POEMS OF 1799—POEMS OF NATURE — WORDSWORTH'S JOY IN NATURE — PERSONAL NOTE IN THESE POEMS—PATRIOTIC SONNETS—LATER POEMS—ATTITUDE OF THE PUBLIC TO COLERIDGE — AND WORDSWORTH — WORDSWORTH'S REALISM—HIS ROMANCE—THE 'PRELUDE'—SOUTHEY—SCOTT—NEW

ISSUES OF ROMANCE—EARLY WORK—SCOTT AND GOETHE—'MINSTRELSY'—ROMANCES IN VERSE—'WAVERLEY NOVELS'—AFFINITIES AND INFLUENCE—MOORE—TRAGEDY: MISS BAILLIE—'OSORIO'—'THE BORDERERS'—COMEDY—SHERIDAN—THE NOVEL—ROMANCE: BECKFORD—MRS RADCLIFFE—MACKENZIE—GODWIN—NOVEL OF MANNERS: MISS BURNEY—MISS AUSTEN—MISS EDGEWORTH—DIDACTIC NOVEL: MRS MORE—MRS INCHBALD—BAGE—DEVELOPMENT OF THE NOVEL—LIGHTER POETRY: WOLCOT, GIFFORD—'ROLLIAD'—ANTI-JACOBIN—BURKE—EARLIER WORK—APPEAL TO EXPERIENCE—EXPEDIENCY—DUTY—LATER WRITINGS—HOW FAR TO BE RECONCILED WITH THE EARLIER—THE GROUND SHIFTED—ATTACK ON INDIVIDUALISM—THE TRUE END OF SOCIETY—EACH NATION BOUND BY ITS PAST—THE STATE CONTROLS THE PASSIONS OF THE INDIVIDUAL—BURKE'S PLACE IN THE HISTORY OF POLITICAL THEORY—ANALOGY BETWEEN POLITICAL LIFE AND THE ORDER OF THE WORLD—CHANGE IN THE WHOLE CONCEPTION OF REASON—HIS STYLE—ANSWERS TO BURKE—MACKINTOSH—PAINE—GODWIN—BENTHAM: AS MORAL PHILOSOPHER—AS LEGISLATIVE REFORMER—AS POLITICAL PHILOSOPHER—COLERIDGE AS PHILOSOPHER—AS LITERARY CRITIC—LAMB—'EDINBURGH' AND 'QUARTERLY'—ORATORS: CHATHAM—BURKE—FOX—SHERIDAN—GRATTAN—PITT—INTELLECTUAL ADVANCE IN EUROPE—STUDY OF OLDER LITERATURE—HISTORY OF LITERATURE—WOLF—HISTORY—THEOLOGY—CHEMISTRY AND BIOLOGY.

THE period covered by the following pages is, roughly speaking, the last quarter of the eighteenth century and the first few years of the nineteenth; or, to date by events in the literary history of Europe, the period from the death of Voltaire and Rousseau (1778) to the death of Schiller (1805). The scheme of the preceding volume has made allowance for a certain amount of overlapping; and, considering the difference of perspective which can hardly fail to assert itself when a fresh writer takes up the narrative, it will be convenient to give some little latitude of interpretation

Limits of the period.

to the provision there expressly made. With this warning, we turn at once to our theme—the Romantic Revolt.

Characteristics of Romance.

With the middle of the eighteenth century a great change began to make itself felt in the thought and literature of western Europe — a change from the spirit of criticism to that of creation; from wit to humour and pathos; from satire and didactic verse to the poetry of passion and impassioned reflection; above all, a change from a narrow and cramping conception of man's reason to one far wider and more adequate to his powers. This change may be conveniently summed up in one phrase: the Romantic Revival, or, if our object be to lay stress on its negative aspect, the Romantic Revolt. But no such phrases can serve as more than a rough index. And it must be understood, on the one hand, that some few writers stand altogether apart from the general movement of the time; and, on the other hand, that behind the apparent unity of that movement several distinct tendencies were at work.

Thus the very words *Romantic* and *Romanticism*, though they have their use and are sanctioned by long tradition, may easily give rise to misconception. They will certainly do so, unless we bear in mind that they cover two completely different meanings. In the narrower and more usual sense, they point to that love of vivid colouring and strongly marked contrasts, that craving for the unfamiliar, the mar-

vellous, the supernatural, which played so large a part in the literature of this period, particularly in its later phases. In the wider and less definite sense, they may be used to signify that revolt from the purely intellectual view of man's nature, that recognition of the rights of the emotions, the instincts and the passions, that vague intimation of sympathy between man and the world around him—in one word, that sense of mystery which, with more or less clearness of utterance, inspires all that is best, all that is most characteristic, in the literature of the last half of the eighteenth century; whether, in the stricter and more familiar sense of the term, it is to be called "romantic" or no. Other implications of the word "romantic" will come before us in the course of our inquiry. But these two at any rate stand out from the beginning, and they must be kept carefully apart.

Yet, distinct as these two things are, it is not difficult to see how, by shades almost imperceptible, the one passes into the other. It is the sense of mystery, the instinct of discontent with the world of "dry light," of pure intellect, which in truth lies at the root of both. It is this which comes first in the order of thought. It is this, with all that directly flows from it, which comes first also in order of time. The vaguer and less specialised forms of romanticism precede those which are more definite and specific. Gray and Burke come before Coleridge; Lessing and Herder — so far as Lessing may in any sense be reckoned with the romanticists—before Tieck and

the Schlegels; Rousseau and Diderot before Chateaubriand and Hugo. But, in each case, the earlier band of writers prepares the way for the later. In each case the later builds upon the foundations which the earlier had laid. In each case the younger men, if they do not own (nor even consciously feel) discipleship, at least win their hearing from an audience which the older had created.

It is this which enables us, apart from exceptional cases already indicated, to treat the various tendencies of the time as contributive to the same movement. It is this which justifies us in saying that they are sprung, in some sense, from a common source. But in saying this, we are bound also to acknowledge how widely separate are the springs from which that source is fed. We are bound to admit that we apply the term "romantic" to Wordsworth in a sense very different from that in which we use it of Coleridge; to Rousseau or Herder in a sense very different from that in which we give it to Chateaubriand or Bürger or Tieck.

Contrast between this and the preceding period.

The general conditions under which the romantic movement took its rise, from which it was more or less consciously a reaction, have been set forth in the two preceding volumes. They represent an obviously narrow range of human experience, a markedly limited view of human life. Keen observation and solid wisdom are there in abundance. So, in a still greater degree, are grace and wit and all the more trenchant, the more distinc-

tively intellectual, weapons of style. A wide, if not adventurous, humanity makes itself heard with ever deepening intensity as the century wears on. But however high we may place these qualities—and it is easy to rate them far too low,—no man will say that they are the only qualities which we demand in literature; few will even claim that they are the highest. Even in prose, where the surest achievements of the period were undoubtedly won, we miss the note of individual emotion, of brooding reflection, of imaginative passion—we miss the colour and the music—which we find in the greatest writers both of the preceding and the following age. In poetry, it need hardly be said, the contrast makes itself still more strongly felt. The world of Pope, and even the world of Collins, Gray, and Goldsmith, is small indeed when compared with that of Shakespeare and Milton, of Wordsworth and Coleridge; while in France and Germany the earlier part of the century can offer absolutely no names to point the contrast against the giants of its last forty years; against Rousseau or against Chénier, against Bürger, Schiller, and Goethe.

The precursors.

It was in England, as readers of the preceding volume are well aware, that the dawn of the romantic movement first declared itself.[1] And it is in England that the various elements which met and harmonised in that movement may most

[1] See the remarks on this point in Mr Millar's *Mid-Eighteenth Century*, pp. 212-214.

readily be traced. For that purpose it will be well to glance back for a moment over the ground already traversed.

The poets who led the revolt against the ideals of the Augustan age have certain features in common. Of these the most significant are a ready openness to the influences of external nature, and an equally ready response to the tenderer springs of feeling; a poignant sympathy with the sadder side of man's experience; with the trouble that comes to him from without or, what is yet more characteristic of the time, with the melancholy, sometimes of a more pensive, sometimes of a sterner cast, which besets him from within.

Thomson.

In Thomson, who is generally held to have initiated the revolt against the school of Pope, the two impulses are commonly held apart. In his successors they tend more and more completely to fuse. The human episodes in *The Seasons* are, with few exceptions,[1] in the nature of purple patches, thrust in, it might not unfairly be said, to relieve the monotony of the descriptive groundwork. And just because it is descriptive, the groundwork presents the various scenes, successively enwoven in it, as so many pictures reproduced faithfully from nature, with as little refraction as may be from the personal emotions of the painter.

In Goldsmith the process is exactly reversed. The scenery has become little more than a background

[1] The most notable of them is the picture of the shepherd lost in the storm (*Winter*).

for the human figures that move across it; and this is still more true of *The Deserted Village* than it is of *The Traveller*. In Gray and Collins, who represent a more decisive breach with Augustan tradition than Goldsmith, a like result is reached by strangely different means. Here the fusion of the two elements is complete. The churchyard is not merely the resting-place, but in its suggestion of sorrow lit by "trembling hope," the fitting symbol of a life "marked by melancholy for her own"; while every object in the wide-watered landscape, half seen by Collins through the "dusky veil" of evening, gives back an echo to the "softened strain" of pensive rapture which fills his own heart with melody. In all three poets, it is not so much the voice of nature herself, as the "still sad music of humanity" vibrating in it, that strikes on our ear.

Goldsmith and others.

And this is a new note in English poetry. It is different from the mystical adoration of nature, as the symbol of God, which is to be found in Vaughan and Herbert. It is still more different from the blithe delight in nature for her own sake which we know in the Elizabethans. And, though it is also different enough from the calculated effects of Coleridge, or the "exulting and abounding" force of Byron, it still has something of what we recognise as most peculiar to their temper. It is the first stage of that gradual transfusion of the spirit of man into outward nature, of outward nature into the spirit of man, which is among the most marked characteristics of romantic poetry.

All the poems here spoken of, with the exception of *The Deserted Village*, were conceived, and all, save the two poems of Goldsmith, were written, before the death of George the Second. With the beginning of the new reign came the publication of two books whose influence on the literature of the Continent, if not on that of their own country, it is impossible to overrate. These are Macpherson's *Ossian* and Percy's *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*. The former belongs to the years 1760 to 1763; the latter to 1765. What was the exact nature of the impulse which each of these gave to the romantic revival?

Macpherson and Percy.

It was, broadly speaking, to deepen the strain of sadness still further, to strengthen it with the swift rush of tragic action, to charge it with the wail of wistful longing, with the muffled beat of despondency and despair. The former was the special contribution of the *Reliques*, the latter of *Fingal* and *Temora*. And it would be hard to say which of the two had the greater influence on the general temper of the age, which of them can claim the larger share in shaping the particular course taken by the current of romance.

To gauge the full effect produced by these works, we must turn, as Wordsworth insisted, to the literature of the Continent. Glance at the earliest and most popular of Goethe's works, and we still see it is in the language of Ossian that Werther bids farewell to life and nerves himself for the quest of death. Pass

Their influence on the Continent.

on two generations later, and we shall find echoes of Ossian in the sincerest and most passionate of those who created the "literature of despair."[1] Take the political movement of the intervening years, and once more it is the strained emphasis, it is often the very imagery, of Ossian which inspires the vapourings of the Carmagnoles and the full-blooded rhetoric of Napoleon. It is the same with Herder, it is the same with Chateaubriand.

The direct influence of the *Reliques* was probably confined within a narrower circle. It was less popular, more distinctly literary, in its operation. But within this narrower circle it told with incalculable force. It moulded those who themselves moulded the literary temper of the time. The mark of the *Reliques* is indelibly stamped on the poems of Chatterton. They furnished the direct model to Scott's *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*, and are the dominant influence on his original poetry. In Germany they were eagerly seized both by scholar and by poet. They supplied one of its keenest weapons to the armoury of Wolf. They stand in the foreground of the Pantheon of Herder. They were the "matins and evensong" of Bürger. Without them the ballads of Goethe and Schiller, as without them *The Ancient Mariner* and *The Three Graves*, could hardly have been written as they are.

The tragic motive, the tragic atmosphere—these, then, are the main things given by the *Reliques* and Ossian to the romantic movement. To these, two

[1] See the earlier novels of George Sand; in particular, *Lélia*.

things further must be added. The first, the cult of popular poetry, is closely connected with the preceding, and it explains itself. But it is significant that the seed thus sown bore direct fruit rather in Germany than in Britain. It was not from Percy, but from Ramsay and Fergusson, that Burns drew his inspiration. And when Wordsworth and Scott, the one in Pastoral the other in Romance, took up the theme, it was not to the heard melodies of the people's song, but to the unheard melodies of their speech and action, that they gave voice. The original motive, thanks to the privilege of genius, was almost lost in the variations. In Germany it was different. Lessing and Herder in criticism and translation, Bürger and Goethe in original poetry, all owed and acknowledged a direct debt to the initiative of Percy.

Their treatment of the supernatural.

The other point, on which, however, some reservation must be made, is an awakened sense of the mysterious, the supernatural. The reservation is demanded on two grounds. It is needed because, as will at once be admitted, some signs of that quality are to be traced even in earlier writers. It is needed because neither in the *Reliques* nor even in Ossian is the evidence of it so strong as is sometimes thought.

Firstly, then, a sense of mystery and even of the supernatural is to be found in writers of the preceding generation. It must be allowed, for instance, beyond question to Collins. His earlier odes offer numberless touches of the former. His *Ode on the Superstitions of the Scottish Highlands,* to which may be

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added his *Ode to Fear*, is one unbroken witness to the latter. Yet a moment's reflection will show how timidly, we might almost say reluctantly, that witness is given. In the very act of welcoming the supernatural, Collins—perhaps with the shrinking instinctive to his malady—betrays that he mistrusts it. He holds it at arm's length. He rather suffers his imagination to play around it from without than strives to bring it forth, as his own creation, from within. He rather suggests it as a poetic theme for others, for the inoffending author of *Douglas* in particular, than seeks to grapple with it boldly in his own strength. Contrast his Scottish ode with *The Ancient Mariner* or with *Lenore*, contrast it even with the *Halloween* of Burns, and we recognise at a glance how guarded he was in drawing on the treasures of the new region which his genius had discovered.

On the other hand, it must in fairness be allowed that neither in the *Reliques*, nor even in Ossian, is any overwhelming stress laid on the supernatural. In the *Reliques*—apart from the Arthurian Ballads, which, it is safe to say, made less impression than any other part of the book—it is seldom that any trace of it is to be found. In *King Estmere* there is a touch, a rather perfunctory touch, of "gramarye." In *Sweet William's Ghost* the supernatural is more boldly handled, and there are some few other instances. But, taken together, they cannot be said to amount to very much. With Ossian, no doubt, the case is different. Many of the best-known episodes bring us face to face with the form of the gods, with ap-

paritions of the dead or the doomed. Yet even here the vein is hardly worked with the set purpose for which we might have looked. The bounds between the supernatural and the natural are faintly drawn, and the edge of the former is blunted accordingly. These incidents were stuff of the daily life of the Gael, and as such they are presented by Macpherson. There is little or no attempt to make the reader's flesh creep by their recital; no desire, as in the full-blown romanticists of the next generation, to freeze his blood by suggestion of ghastly detail.

Their resemblance and contrast.

So far, then, if judged by the course it took in England, had the romantic movement been carried before the year taken for our starting-point (1775).

Interpreted in the wider sense, Romance had already done much to bring the world of emotion once more within the range of imaginative art. Gray and Collins had idealised the mood of contemplation and melancholy. The *Reliques* and Ossian had deepened the vein of tragedy, which first comes to the surface in the odes of Collins. The poetry of outward nature had been discovered anew by Thomson and explored by men as different as Gray and Goldsmith, Falconer and Collins, and all this had widened the horizon of man's vision; it had awakened a new sense of wonder in his heart.

Understood in the narrower sense, the romantic movement had as yet barely entered on its course. If Chatterton and Collins and the later poems of

Gray be excepted, the *Reliques* and Ossian are perhaps the only works in which its action is clearly to be traced. But the beginnings, though small, were rich in the promise of the future. The least of all seeds was destined, within comparatively few years, to become the greatest among herbs. The period inaugurated by these two books — one of them, no doubt, questionable enough—was to prove one of the most brilliant in the history of European literature.

The romantic movement owes much to each of these Collections. But, as regards style at any rate, the debt in the two cases is of very different kinds. The style of Ossian is charged, if not overcharged, with colour; it is emphatic and declamatory. The *Reliques*, on the other hand, are simplicity itself. There are few books in which effects so strong and deep are wrought with so little effort. The same difference is reflected in their narrative methods. The narrative of Ossian is cloudy, not to say confused. That of the Ballads is a model of directness. If, as in *Edward of the Bloody Brand*, the hearer is ever left to gather the story for himself, it is for a special purpose—to intensify the horror by forcing us to follow step by step the emotions of those who prompted the deed and who did it. In no other way could the tragic motive of the poem have been either so briefly or so powerfully driven home. In Ossian, on the other hand, the allusive method wearies from its very sameness. It is seldom used for any purpose that might not have been served as well, or better, by a

plain statement. And it is commonly not only allusive but obscure.

The very defects of Ossian, however, are not far removed from the sources of the power. The emphasis, the heavy colouring of the style, the wailing note which rises from its cadences, the suggestion of sombre majesty which hangs over both style and narrative—all these fall in with one at least of the currents which went to swell the flood-tide of Romance. They found a responsive chord in the hearts of Coleridge and Byron, of Schiller and the youthful Goethe, of Chateaubriand and George Sand. Nor were they, if only through Chateaubriand, without effect upon certain sides of the genius of Hugo.

The *Reliques* strike an entirely different, and it must be admitted a more stirring, note. It is the note to be heard in the poetry, above all in the songs and ballads, of Scott; in the ballads of Bürger, Schiller, and Goethe; in the more inspired part of the poetry of Coleridge.

Once more, however, differently as the two Collections may have worked in some respects, in others they can never be disjoined. Both of them deepened as well as widened the range of human passion; both brought men once more face to face with the supernatural; both, finally, led men to recognise the undying poetry of the legends, the memories, the heroic figures, of popular tradition. In this sense we may say that Europe owes to them not merely the works indicated above, but the seed which bore fruit in *Old Mortality* and *Faust* and *La Légende des Siècles.*

The opening years of our period did not promise well for the future of Romance. A harsh fate had followed the poetic innovators of the previous generation. Gray had "never spoken out"; Collins, Goldsmith, and Chatterton had all died before their time: the two former cut off in middle life, the last before he had even reached the threshold of manhood. The two survivors of the movement, Macpherson and Percy, had been received, as has been said, far more coldly in their own island than on the Continent. Macpherson's credit had been destroyed partly by his own shuffling and arrogance, partly by the relentless scorn of Johnson. Percy himself had the regard of the dictator; but that is more than could be said for his ballads. The star of Johnson, of the old order, was for the moment in the ascendant; and the *Lives of the Poets*, advertised since 1777, was completed in 1781. Any observer might well have been excused for supposing the romantic revolt to be irrevocably crushed.

Apparent reaction against Romance.

Prophecies in such matters are notoriously unsafe. The very next year (1782) saw the standard of rebellion raised afresh. In that year appeared the first acknowledged publication of Cowper, *Table Talk*, with other poems, serious and sportive. On the surface there was little to show the real leanings of the new poet, and they might easily have escaped a careless reader. The bulk of the volume was taken up with didactic verse, interspersed with satire on the religious and

Ended by Cowper.

social levities of the day. It was couched in the heroic couplet; it contained a compliment, though with something of a double edge, to Pope, and even some few echoes of his style. On these grounds, and perhaps yet more on account of its fervent avowal of Christian belief, it secured the praise of Johnson. Whether the champion of poetic orthodoxy would have felt thus, had he penetrated the extent of the new writer's heresies, or known his private views about the *Lives of the Poets*, may reasonably be doubted. As it is, Johnson's benevolent verdict may be taken to represent the judgment of those who were pleased to see so vigorous a writer follow Goldsmith in preserving the traditional metre of the Augustans, who were attracted by his religious fervour, and who, for these reasons, were willing to overlook his innovations.

His innovations.

For the innovations are there, and they are not far beneath the surface. The language of Cowper, with rare exceptions, is singularly free —freer even than that of Goldsmith— from the artificialities and inversions which marked the school of Pope, the "poetic diction" from which even Collins had not been able wholly to escape. Raised but little above the ordinary language of prose, it is probably the purest English which any poet had written since Dryden. The couplet in his hands—Churchill was probably his model—regains the freedom of movement which, in the main, it had lost since Dryden. The lines flow on with varied pauses, not couplet by couplet but paragraph by

paragraph. There is none of that forced antithesis, that laboured balance of line against line, hemistich against hemistich, which is so wearisome in Pope's disciples, and even in many passages of Pope himself. And there are, if only in one passage, touches of nature which for their genius of imaginative observation are a new thing in English poetry; the essentially romantic contrast between the "green meads" and the "yellow tilth"; the vision of the streams edged with osiers, upon which the poet gazed in his daily walks; the image of the "blue rim where skies and mountains meet," which, by a flash of intuition, he transfers from the highlands he had never seen to the rolling pastures of the Ouse.

His religious fervour.

Even more significant are the glowing outbursts in which Cowper gives utterance to the thoughts which lay nearest to his heart—his pæan to liberty; his moving tribute to those who had toiled in the service of man or God; his denunciation of slavery; his fervent exaltation of the Gospel and the ministry of the Gospel; his story, simple almost as that told by the evangelist himself, of the journey to Emmaus. With these must be taken the hymns, nearly seventy in all, which a few years earlier (1779) he had contributed to the Olney Collection. They are among the noblest in our language, and place Cowper in the same rank with the other great hymn-writers of the century—with Isaac Watts, with Toplady, with Charles Wesley.

This side of Cowper's genius is memorable in itself.

It is still more memorable because it recalls the debt which English letters owe to the religious revival, whether Evangelical or Methodist, of the eighteenth century. As to the ultimate effects of that revival on the general life of the country, there have been the inevitable differences of opinion. But in literature, and especially in poetry, it would seem to have worked almost wholly for the good. It disimprisoned a whole world of thought and feeling which had been fast chained beneath the hide-bound formalism of the preceding era, and for want of which the land was perishing of inanition. The poetic revival began to make itself felt within a few years after the Wesleys' life-long mission was inaugurated. And, all things considered, it is difficult to resist the conclusion, not indeed that the religious movement was the cause of the literary movement, but that both sprang in the first instance from a common source; and that, as years went on, the revival in literature was immeasurably quickened by finding an atmosphere charged with emotion and sympathy ready to receive it. In Cowper's case, at any rate, the direct connection of cause and effect can hardly be gainsaid. And nothing could more clearly mark the gulf which separates him from Pope.

Influence of the religious revival.

Three years later than *Table Talk*, was published the work upon which Cowper's fame traditionally rests. Shortly before the issue of his first venture he had become acquainted with a butterfly enthusiast, Lady Austen; and in the honeymoon of their friendship she, being "fond of blank verse,"

The Task.

had commissioned her hero of the hour to write a poem in that metre. The unpromising subject she selected was the Sofa. This was the origin of *The Task.*

Judiciously treating the Sofa merely as a spring-board, Cowper at once plunges into themes of his own choosing. The only part that the Sofa really plays in the poem is somewhat unfortunate. The grotesqueness of his official theme leads Cowper at times to infuse a flavour of the mock heroic, almost of the burlesque, which sorts ill with the solid qualities of the dish he sets before us. Those qualities, alike for the good and the less good, are much the same as those of the previous volume. The language is as pure; the verse, more difficult as it is to manage, is as harmonious; the religious faith and the love of external nature are expressed with still greater eloquence. The style, no doubt, is deliberately staid; but when the poet is truly stirred, a deeper note comes into his voice, and then his blank verse rises to a higher flight than any which had been written since Milton.

Cowper's attitude to nature.

As for the substance of the poem, the two main themes are nature and God; and in Cowper's mind they are inseparably connected. Indeed the oft-quoted line, "God made the country and man made the town," is the first direct avowal of a feeling which was to inspire much of what is best, not only in his own poetry, but in that of the succeeding generation. Cowper, however, was not the man to stop short with an

abstract idea, however pregnant. And *The Task* abounds, far more than the preceding volume, with detailed observation of nature. Much of this, no doubt, is merely observation. It lacks the imaginative touch, without which observation is of no avail. There is too much of the market-gardener, too much of the retired gentleman with a taste for horticulture, about many of his descriptions. The Hypericum and the Mezereon, the vegetable marrow and the pumpkin, are hardly likely to stir the same enthusiasm in the reader that they did in Cowper. But such passages as

> "beneath (the trees)
> The chequered earth seems restless as a flood
> Brushed by the wind;"[1]

such pictures as that of the winter morning or the noon in spring, or the changing aspects of the meadows of the Ouse, are conceived in a very different vein; and they show Cowper at his best. It is true that the landscape in which he most delights is a sober landscape, a landscape which in itself has none of the charm that belongs to the lakes and hills of Words-

[1] It is significant that these lines are quoted by William Gilpin (*Forest Scenery*, I. § iii.) This writer, whose earlier work was known in MS. to Gray, played a considerable part in preparing the way for the romantic love of nature and the picturesque. He has something of Ruskin's delicate observation, particularly as to subtle effects of light and shade. But he is too much under the tyranny of "the picturesque," and his style aims at more than it is able to achieve. His best-known works are *Observations on the River Wye and S. Wales* (1782), which seems to have hovered in the memory of Wordsworth (*Tintern*), *Mountains and Lakes of Cumberland and Westmoreland* (1786), and *Forest Scenery* (1791).

worth, the mountain and sea of Byron, or the gorgeous transformations of the world of sense into a world of spirit which are the secret of Shelley. But it is the landscape which Cowper had made his own, and his love of it enabled him to render its quiet beauty with surpassing power and charm. It is a landscape akin to that of Collins' *Evening;* but bating that exception, if it be an exception, and certain faint anticipations in other writers, *The Task* is probably the earliest poem in our language to reproduce to the imagination the effect left by a given locality, a particular type of scenery, upon the eye. Other poets had individualised from nature as a whole. They had taken a particular season, a particular hour of the day, and striven to paint either its significant details or its general effect. But none had given to this vision a local habitation. This was what Cowper attempted, and this was what he achieved, thus doing for English poetry and the English midlands what some few years earlier Rousseau had done for French prose and the lakes and copses and lower mountain-slopes of Western Switzerland and Savoy.

To Cowper, however, nature does not only mean trees and flowers; it does not only mean river and upland, hill and valley, tilth and pasture. It is peopled with bird and beast: the nightingale, the stockdove and the kite, the redbreast and the bullfinch, the half-wild creatures which yet have been the immemorial friends of man, the fawn, the squirrel, and the hare. Here again he strikes a new note in English poetry. Earlier poets may have described

them, or some of them, from without. To Cowper they are companions and friends. Compare the poem on Beau the Spaniel with the stirring description of Theseus' hounds in Shakespeare.[1] In the latter the dog is a splendid animal, a thing useful to man in the service of the chase, an animated implement and nothing more. In the former he is a being who can anticipate his master's wishes, who can live with man as a comrade, who can love and be loved. Or compare the lines on *A Retired Cat* with Gray's sparkling epitaph on *A Cat drowned in a Vase of Goldfish.* Both poems are full of humour. But Gray treats his cat throughout with a lofty patronage, which is poles asunder from the human kindliness, the wistful fellow-feeling of Cowper. The same sense of brotherhood, a sense touched here into pathos, prompts his *Epitaph on a Hare.* The best and most characteristic work of Cowper in this vein is to be found in the shorter poems just referred to. But there are many instances of it, though doubtless less striking, in *The Task.* In all alike Cowper touches, and touches for the first time, a chord which has often since been heard in our poetry, above all in Burns and Scott, in Wordsworth and Matthew Arnold.

Humorous though he was, the humour of Cowper is not seen to such advantage when he turns to man. Here he had been anticipated by Goldsmith and, in the field of poetry at any rate, he is outstripped. It may be that he took his mission as religious and social reformer too seriously

His humour and Letters.

[1] Or the picture of the hare in *Venus and Adonis.*

to put forth his full strength in this direction when he wrote with an unconverted public before his eye. It is significant that his one undisputed triumph in this sort was won as a distraction from his own sad delusions, and, "but for that sadness, had never been written." *John Gilpin* is one of the gayest poems in the language. It is conceived in something of the same vein as Goldsmith's *Mad Dog*. But the "linen-draper bold" and the lady of the "frugal mind" have won, and deserved to win, more friends than the "man who ran a godly race" and the dog who, "to win his private ends, went mad" and bit him. Yet there is nothing in Cowper which can for a moment be put in the scales against the Parson and Schoolmaster of the *Deserted Village*, or the gallery of portraits enshrined in *Retaliation*. With the Letters the case is different. Here humour, and humour of a peculiarly human strain, is the first thing to strike us. And it strikes us the more by contrast with the other great collection of the time, that of Horace Walpole (1717-1797). There is no need to put the two collections in the balance against each other. And he would be a rash man who should undertake to say which is the more delightful. But it will hardly be denied that, if he lacks the wit and sparkle of Walpole, Cowper has a humour both more delicate and more human than his brilliant rival. The visit of a candidate, the escape of a pet hare, a walk to the next village, the present of a fish, the tremors of an author, the pranks of a youthful friend—such is the staple of his "divine chit-chat"; which, however, does

not always refrain from playing even with his own gloomiest convictions.[1] None of his works is better known to the present day; and none is more calculated to win him love.

The personal strain in his poetry.

Cowper restored to English poetry the power of expressing the religious instincts of man; he strengthened its hold on the world of outward nature; he was a keen satirist and, within certain limits, a born humourist. In all these things his work is distinctive; in most of them it creates a precedent. But there is one quality in which he not only had no forerunner, but in which he can hardly be said to have left successors. In his genius for uttering with absolute directness, and in the simplest possible language, his own personal feelings, the most intimate experience of his heart, he stands to this day without a rival. In the lines of *The Task* where he speaks of his own affliction — "I was a stricken deer that left the herd,"—in *The Castaway* and in the two poems to Mary Unwin, he reached the highest point which it was given him to attain; and he opened a path in which no subsequent poet has been able to follow him. But though, in the strict sense, such poems stand alone, it is easy to see their affinity with much that is most characteristic of the romantic era. Their literary form, not to speak of their moral outlook, is strangely different. But in the last resort they are of the same stock as the self-revelations of Rousseau and his literary descendants, as the *Ode*

[1] See his letter to Bull, July 27, 1791.

on Dejection, as much of the most notable poetry of Matthew Arnold.

This, indeed, is the one point when Cowper stands in direct relation to the romantic movement in the narrow sense. In his love of nature, in his religious bent, even in his humour, he was touched by the vaguer tendencies of that movement, and his work certainly went to swell its force. Yet, the humour excepted, there is not one of them which does not betray the workings of an influence which is most decisively opposed to all that we understand by Romance—the influence of Pope and the Augustans. Both in his religious poetry and in his poetry of nature there is commonly a sediment of discursiveness, of argumentation, which makes it impossible for the stream to run absolutely clear. It is only in such poems as those to Mary Unwin that he works off this disturbing element. It is just where he approaches most nearly to the inmost spirit of romance that he comes most completely to himself. The only other work of Cowper which need here be mentioned is the translation of Homer into blank verse, which occupied him from 1784 to 1791, and which he continued to revise until just before his death. It was avowedly undertaken as a counterblast to Pope, whom Cowper accused of "making Homer strut in buckram," and whose translation was certainly the chief source of the "glossy, unfeeling diction" which was the bane of English poetry for the two next generations, and which Wordsworth denounced in the Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads*. As a protest against this, Cowper's

venture had its importance. It serves to accentuate the instinctive reaction against Pope, which, as we have seen, was his starting-point. But, on the whole, it is lacking in the first essential of a translation: spirit and go.

It has been necessary to dwell at some length on Cowper. For he stands, so to speak, at the parting of the ways: half a disciple of the old order, half, indeed more than half, a standard-bearer of the new. His successors are more whole-hearted. And, for our purpose, it will suffice to speak of them more briefly.

Burns.

The year after the issue of *The Task*, the first edition of Burns' early poems was published at Kilmarnock (1786); it was republished, with additions, in the following year at Edinburgh. Some score of further poems were added in the edition of 1793. Many more were published in two serial miscellanies, *The Scots' Musical Museum*, edited by Johnson between 1787 and 1803, and *The Melodies of Scotland*, issued by George Thomson, to whom some of the most interesting letters of Burns are addressed, from 1793 onwards. The first collected edition was published four years after the poet's death, in 1800.

The greatest of the love-songs[1] belong to the later years of Burns' short life (1759-1796). So do the finest poems inspired by the love of country and of freedom.[2] But, even without these and certain

[1] *E.g.*, O, my love's like a red, red rose (1794); Oh, wert thou in the cauld blast (1796).

[2] *E.g.*, Scots, wha hae (1793); Is there for honest poverty? (1794-95).

poems already written but suppressed for the moment out of prudence,[1] the Kilmarnock volume offered ample proof of the marvellous genius of the new writer and of his extraordinary range. Love and hate, pathos and scorn, a quick eye for nature, and a deep hold on all that stirs the heart of man—these were manifest from the first. And from the first they were welcomed in Scotland, though not unnaturally they were more slow to win their way across the Border. It is significant that Cowper, while he lamented the "barbarism" of the peasant poet, was among the first to recognise his greatness.

His relation to Scottish writers and to Percy.

Outward influence, the influence of individual writers or of literary fashion, counts for little in the case of Burns. Something he may have owed to Beattie; something more to Allan Ramsay and to Fergusson. But his only serious debt is to the floating tradition, the popular poetry, of his own country. And this is a debt which increased, rather than diminished, as time went on. It appears in the defiant humour, as well as in the characteristic metre,[2] of his earlier poems. It appears still more strongly, and under a form yet nobler, in the songs of later years. Here therefore we stand face to face with the true meaning of the work initiated by Percy. The *Reliques* were not merely a voice from the past. Their task was not merely to open a mine of striking

[1] *E.g.*, *The Unco Guid* and *Holy Willie's Prayer*, or, to take an example of a very different style, *The Jolly Beggars*.

[2] The metre, *e.g.*, of the *Field-mouse* and the *Mountain Daisy*.

incident or historical tradition, in which a romantic poet with a turn for folk-lore might dig for treasure. Their best service was to show that the past is still alive in the present; and that the theme which is on every lip, the melody which rings in every ear, only awaits the touch of genius to become that which has the double charm of immemorial antiquity and of absolutely spontaneous individuality. It would be ridiculous to say that Burns would not have sung without prompting from Percy. But it may well be that the vogue of Percy, probably greater around the Border than in any other part of the island, gave him confidence; and it is certain that the popularity of the *Reliques* did much to win him an immediate hearing. In any case, Burns is the supreme instance of all that might be drawn from the fountain of popular poetry, first unsealed by Percy. The fascination of the theme and utterance of the country side, the sense that a poet must sing in the speech of his birth, in the language which comes charged for himself and others with memories of the home and of the vanished past, the charm of the savour of the soil—all these things were implicit in the labours of Percy; and all come to the surface in the poetry of Burns. It is here that Burns is most closely bound up with the inner movement of his age. In other respects it is, in the main, the vaguer elements of that movement which he embodied. Here he is, in the strictest sense of the term, a romantic poet.

The other point in which he approaches — approaches, however, without entering—the inner circle

of Romance is his treatment of the supernatural. But here the approach is made with many reserves; it is made, we may almost say, under protest. In *Tam o' Shanter*, which he regarded as "his standard performance in the poetical line," and again in *Halloween*, he takes up the theme, or something like the theme, which Collins had suggested to Home. But he does so with a difference. Vividly as his spirit world is painted, it is clear that what really attracted him was not so much the "superstitions" themselves as the fears and hopes, the desires and terrors, which they kindled in the breast of those who held them. The beliefs themselves are treated with jesting tolerance, if not with a dash of sarcasm. It is the trepidations of the lovers in the one poem, the lusts and alarms of drunken Tam in the other, on which the whole strength of the poet is put forth. To Coleridge or Bürger the romance of these pieces would have seemed a sadly half-hearted performance, or rather no romance at all. The same is true of the *Address to the Deil*. From the first, the hero of this poem is the being not of Biblical authority, but of popular belief; not the Devil, but the Deil. From the first therefore, Burns being what he was, the belief in question is little more than a half belief. Even that half belief is quizzed by the poet in one bantering reference or comparison after another. And at the end it is fairly swept away by a burst of human fellow-feeling which, irresistible as it is, has certainly nothing to say to the gravities of Romance.

His treatment of the supernatural.

In the dramatic side of these beliefs, or half beliefs, in their power to stir emotion which would otherwise have slept, Burns took the keenest interest. But his own temper was too sceptical, his own humour too free from artifice, to allow him even that "willing suspension of disbelief" which is needful to such effects as were sought and attained by Coleridge. And this points directly to the real source of Burns' power, the true field of his genius. The loves and hates of man, his follies and his struggles, these are his true theme—these, and the instinct which drives man outwards into nature, which prompts him to seek the reflection of his own passions and his own destiny in the changing face of nature.

In all these things Burns stands out sharply from his immediate forerunners. There is a fire, a passion in his poetry to which all of them, with the exception perhaps of Collins, were strangers. There is the distinctively lyric note which is heard in none of them, except Collins.

This makes itself felt, firstly, in his presentment of nature. He has few or no descriptions. The nearest approach to one is to be found in *The Brigs of Ayr;* and there the dramatic form in which it is cast affords an escape from the coldness which is the danger besetting that kind of poetry. In place of description, we either have a few vivid touches which suggest to the imagination all that the poet deliberately withholds from the eye; or the scenery becomes nothing more than a setting for the human passion which is the real

Of nature.

theme of the poem,—its details furnish the imagery in which that passion is expressed. Of the former a notable instance occurs in the opening stanza of *A Winter Night*. Examples of the latter abound in the songs; *Of a' the Airts*, for instance, or *The Lea Rig* or *The Birks of Aberfeldy*. But the most striking perhaps is in one of the few dramatic ballads, which is also one of the finest poems, written by Burns—

> "The wan moon is setting behind the white wave,
> And time is setting with me, oh!"

Since the appearance of *The Seasons*, the set description had been the stock-in-trade of all poets of nature. It had ruled the market in Britain; it had made the tour of Europe. It had been assailed by the greatest critic of the time;[1] but with no visible effect. Burns, if not the first, was among the first to break the spell of this questionable fashion. A few years before his death, it was revived, strangely enough, in the boyish poetry of Wordsworth. But it cannot be said ever to have regained its former hold. Burns had shown a more excellent way; and that way, as soon as he had come to his true self, Wordsworth was to follow.

In his feeling for living things, Burns was to some extent anticipated by Cowper. But here too his originality is evident. If Cowper advances upon Gray, so certainly does Burns on Cowper. With all his "sylvan tenderness," Cowper does not rise to

[1] Lessing, *Laokoon*, xvii.

the same instinct of brotherhood with the beasts, nor does he paint their fears and hopes with the same human pathos, that Burns pours into *The Auld Mare Maggie*, or *Poor Maillie*, or the *Field-mouse*. So completely does he throw himself into their life that, in the last of these poems, the very moral, which should by every rule of prescription have been addressed to man, is spoken in consolation to the houseless "beastie," whose panic he interprets by his own dangers and apprehensions.

Nor is Burns less original in his poetry of man. Good-fellowship, satire, friendship, liberty, and love—these are his main themes; and he handles each of them with a touch entirely his own. The first of these, it is obvious, gives less scope than the others to a poet's genius. The secret of Burns' success is that he faced this frankly, and treated his subject in the simplest, broadest, and consequently in the coarsest, manner. The opening scene of *Tam o' Shanter*, and still more *The Jolly Beggars*, give us the very devilment of light-hearted revelry; revelry naked and not ashamed, and for that reason both more human and more healthy than if it had skulked behind the traditional innuendoes of bacchanalian verse. The triumph is won because the poet grasps the nettle boldly, or rather because he refuses to recognise that it is a nettle at all.

Of man.

This side of Burns stands out strongly from the general trend of poetry in his time. The contrast maliciously drawn by Hazlitt holds of others besides

Wordsworth: "their poetry is the poetry of mere sentiment, Burns' is a very highly sublimated essence of animal existence." And it is a contrast which does much to account for the enormous popularity of Burns. It has won a way for his genius into the hearts of thousands who have remained cold before the more ethereal poetry of Shelley, Keats, or Coleridge. And this may be said without accepting Hazlitt's implied sneer at "mere sentiment," or denying that to give imaginative form to such sentiment is the noblest function of the poet.

His satire.

A higher flight was offered by satire; and in no direction does Burns break more markedly with the traditions of the century. Compare his satire with that of Pope. Both poets excel in dramatic portraits. But, alike in method and temper, the contrast is significant. Pope's portraits are masterpieces of analysis; those of Burns are dramatic creations. Pope's thrusts are prompted by deadly hatred; Burns, scornful though he may be, has something of the good-humour of Dryden. The contrast, no doubt, may easily be pushed too far, at least as regards method. It would be absurd to maintain that Pope's method in Sir Balaam is unreservedly analytic. It would be absurd to deny that his character of Atticus, with all its dissections and antitheses, is, in the fullest sense of the term, a creation. But, though the elements of humour are present in the latter portrait, they are prevented from crystallising by the sheer malice of the painter. And, even had they done so, the "civil

leer" of Atticus hardly cuts so deep into the roots of things as the unsuspecting hypocrisy of Holy Willie, who thinks his vices aloud with the complacent rhetoric of one trained professionally to the conviction that all his qualities must be virtues. So it remains true that the *Prayer*, though its method recalls that of *Hudibras*, is a new thing in a century which is pre-eminently that of satire; and that, as a distinct form of poetry, unless we except the self-revelations of Byron's Southey, the way here opened by Burns is a way since practically untrodden.

His songs.

It is in song, however, that the powers of Burns are at their brightest: in the one song which embodies for all time the Scot's devotion to his fatherland; in the many which embalm the various moods of love. Which of our poets has sung of love so simply, so naturally, so irresistibly from the heart? There is no need to repeat here what has already been said about the imagery of these poems. But what is the secret of their marvellous rhythm? It is that, like so many of the Elizabethan lyrics, they were actually written to music,—music which had rung itself into his heart and become part of his very being. "Until I am complete master of a tune," he writes to Thomson, "I can never compose for it. When one stanza is composed—which is generally the most difficult part of the business—I walk out, sit down now and then, look out for objects in nature around me that are in unison and harmony with the cogitations of my fancy and workings of my bosom, humming every now

and then the air with the verses I have framed." Certainly, not only as to melody, but also as to imaginative quality and imagery, this accounts for much.

With the narrower aspects of the romantic revival Burns has little in common. Except in his love for all that savours of the soil—its speech, its rhythms, and its melodies—he can hardly be said to touch them. With the wider bearings of romance, however, he went heart and soul. He has the rich humour, he has the lyric fervour, he has the genius for idealising common things, which are of its essence. And he has these in greater measure than any of his forerunners. For this reason it may fairly be said that, with the publication of *Poems, chiefly in the Scottish dialect*, the triumph of the romantic revolt was practically ensured.

Blake.

If recognition came to Burns sooner than to other poets of his day, for Blake (1757-1827) it was delayed till long after death. His first volume, *Poetical Sketches* (1783), appeared before *The Task*, before the early poems of Burns. All, or nearly all, his poetry — such of it as counts — was published before the *Lyrical Ballads.*[1] But for all practical purposes it might never have been issued. A handful of personal friends knew and loved it from the first; "his poems are as grand as his pictures," Fuseli is recorded to have said. As time went on, but not until it had been twenty or thirty years before the public, it became known to

[1] *Songs of Innocence*, 1789; *Songs of Experience*, 1794; the *Prophetic Books* from 1789 to 1804 and even later.

Wordsworth and Coleridge.[1] But to the world at large it was a sealed book. And the middle of the nineteenth century had passed before the rare greatness of its author was in any way generally acknowledged.

This long neglect was doubtless partly due to accident—the accident of Blake's lifelong warfare with the publishers. But the cause is to be sought mainly in the poetry itself: in its childlike simplicity; in its profound mysticism; in its anticipation of tendencies which did not come to ripeness till the days of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. It is to be sought, that is, in the very originality of the poet—a poet born, it may truly be said, out of due time; in the very qualities which, with his magical symbolism and his subtle, if fitful, ear for melody, are now recognised as the surest marks of his greatness.

His poems of child life.

The poems written for and about children are perhaps those which are now most widely known and understood. And few are more characteristic of his genius. If he does not, like Wordsworth, seize the aloofness of the child's life, that which makes the child like a spirit of an abiding world moving among creatures of a day, he shares the every-day joys and sorrows of children, their openness to sudden gusts or lingering memories of terror and ecstasy; he feels the poetry of their grief and their gladness, the grace of their rest and

[1] I infer from a passage in Crabb Robinson's Diary (i. 201) that Wordsworth first became acquainted with Blake's poetry in 1812; it is certain that Coleridge did not discover it till 1818 (see *Letters*, p. 687).

their motion, as no other poet has felt or shared them except Hugo. The open-eyed curiosity of childhood, its genius for welcoming each new experience as it comes—all this to Blake was familiar as the day. For throughout life, behind the subtle instinct of the artist, he had himself the heart of a child. And this came to be more and more so as years went on. His first volume, composed mostly in boyhood and very early youth, is without direct evidence to it. The Songs of Innocence and Experience are full of it. Yet behind this simpler strain there is an undertone of mysticism, deeper than that of Wordsworth himself. And it is the union of the two that makes the specific quality of his poetry. It is a quality of which there had been practically no trace in our poetry since the seventeenth century mystics.

His visionary spirit.

It was just because of his feeling for children that Blake was, like them, a confirmed visionary. He was so in both senses of the term. He lived in a world of visions. And he saw those visions as vividly as other men see trees and houses. This is apparent not only in the Designs, which fall beyond our scope; not only in the Prophetic Books, to which no passing notice can do justice; but also, and hardly less so, in the Poems. With all his love of form and colour, of sunshine and flowers, and the "human form divine," it was not in the world of outward things that he either sought or found them. It was in his own heart, and in the "shaping spirit," which built up again from

within, and with the largest possible licence of adaptation, all that it had unconsciously taken to itself from without. "Natural objects," he wrote in a note pencilled on the margin of Wordsworth's Poems, "always did, and do now, weaken, deaden, and obliterate imagination in me." We might have guessed it, even if he had not told us himself. His poems, like his designs, abound in images from nature. But here, too, they are commonly, in the strictest sense of the term, images and nothing more. They are symbols of the human thought, the human passion, the mystical divination, for which he is striving to find utterance. The *Sunflower* is but one instance, though perhaps the most incomparable of them all, of his ceaseless endeavour

> "To see a world in a grain of sand,
> And a heaven in a wild flower;
> Hold infinity in the palm of [the] hand,
> And eternity in an hour."[1]

Even in poems where he seems to take outward things for his theme, the same impulse, under another form, may clearly be traced. A glance at the lines to Spring, which open the *Poetical Sketches*, will show that it is not Spring as seen by the bodily eye, but the vision of it revealed to the spirit, of which he sings. And so with the other seasons, and the Evening Star, and Morning. All these are magnificent personifications. They challenge comparison with Collins' personification of Evening, and with that of Autumn in the central stanza of the Ode of Keats. But they

[1] *Auguries of Innocence:* Sampson's ed., p. 288.

are more ethereal; and the detail, for all its beauty, is more completely subordinated to the spiritual effect than it is in either of the other poets.

No less full of mystical feeling, though quite in another direction, are the poems which give imaginative form to his moral and spiritual creed. Here, again, all outward things—in this case, all outward law, all specific duties—have melted away. Pity and love alone are left. When we consider how perilous such themes are to the poet, it is little short of a miracle that Blake should have touched them into poetry so noble as are parts, at any rate, of the *Everlasting Gospel* and other pieces. Consciously or unconsciously he follows the symbolic method, he has echoes even of the rhythmical movement, of the older mystics, particularly of Vaughan;[1] just as in the early love-poem, *My silks and fine array*, he has caught—consciously, it should seem, in this instance—the very form and music of the great Elizabethans.

Pictorial element in his poetry.

So far, it is mainly the wider issues of the romantic spirit that we have been tracing; the sense of wonder, the attempt to break through the hard rind of convention and routine, the visionary longings of a soul ill at ease in a world of sense. And all of these, except the last, assert themselves in other poets of the time, even in those who cannot, in the stricter sense, be called romantic. With the visionary instincts, however,—and they belong to Blake with far greater intensity than to any poet

[1] See *Everlasting Gospel*, fragment I, ib., pp. 258-60.

of his day,—we already stand on the threshold of the inner region of Romance. And there are other qualities of his poetry which still more decisively carry us within the pale. Such are to be found in the poems which either suggest or explicitly embody the terror of the supernatural—*Little Boy Lost*, for instance, and *Fair Elenor*. Such, in a still deeper sense, inspire the "sketches," in which the painter's art goes hand in hand with the poet's; the prayer to the Evening Star to "wash the dusk with silver," or the rushing succession of images in *The Tiger*. Of all poets, until we come to Rossetti, Blake is the most pictorial. And it is here that he is most at one with Romance.

Alleged classical revival.

The twelve years following 1782 saw the tide setting fairly towards Romance. They also saw a certain backwash towards the classical ideals. The two men whose names are commonly identified with this return upon the past are Crabbe (1754-1832) and Rogers (1763-1855); and with them must be joined Campbell (1777-1844), who, coming somewhat later, was, in his earlier work at any rate, more decidedly classical than either of them. No one of them, indeed, is a classicist in more than a very limited sense. It is not from Pope, so much as from Gray and Goldsmith,—from those who led the first line of revolt against Pope,—that they trace descent. Romantic they are not; not consistently; not in the sense in which Blake, or even Burns, is romantic. But in

each of them the vein of reflection, of sympathy with humanity, of love for outward nature, is so strong, the points of contrast with the true Augustans, of kinship with the true romanticists, are so many, that to rank them as classics of pure blood would be impossible.

Crabbe.

Of the three, Crabbe was the earliest, and he was by far the most original. His choice of metre—for most of his work is in the heroic couplet—has blinded some of his readers to the novelty of his style and matter. And at times it comes perilously near to doggerel. But it is hard to see what other metre would have suited his purpose — of rapid narrative — equally well. And whatever metre he had chosen, he would still have been a rough workman. His real passion was observation,—observation of man, and especially the darker side of man's character and lot. And he sets about his task with the fixed resolve that it shall be done "as Truth will paint it, and as Bards will not." It is this that caused Hazlitt to denounce him, with scant justice, as a "spy upon nature," as one who turned "the world into one vast infirmary." What Hazlitt does not give sufficient credit for is the vast sympathy which lies behind the observer's instinct; the sleepless compassion for the wilderness of misery which he sees around him, and which he paints with a force all the more telling because it spends itself mainly upon the sombre side of the picture. In this sense — a narrow sense, it may at once be admitted — Byron was justified in

describing him as "nature's sternest painter, and her best."

His realism.

To paint in minute detail, and to paint what is in itself forbidding, is commonly taken to be the mark of the realist. And Crabbe is not only a realist but, Defoe apart, the father of realism in modern literature. Such a method, no doubt, belongs to the satirist, alike in ancient and in modern times; but the satiric intention gives it an altogether different significance. It appears, as an element, in Romance; witness *The Ancient Mariner*, notably in the original draft, and a countless number of touches in the work of Hugo. But there it enters merely by way of contrast, and its function is strictly subordinated to the general effect. The thoroughbred realist stands on very different ground. Here the sordid or ugly is taken for its own sake; or, if any ulterior motive can be alleged, in the faith that unvarnished truth, however repellent at first sight, is not merely bracing to the intellect, but also rich in beauty to the imagination. The theory—though it is by no means always that the artist has troubled himself with theory—is probably true. But true only upon two conditions. The first is that the whole truth be given, and not merely the ugly or sordid part. The second, that the bare fact shall be lighted up by the poet's imagination; that he shall not stop short with the letter, which is manifest to all, but read through it to the inner meaning, which is the possession of the few. On the former of these conditions it is not fair to insist too rigorously; for, art being selection, the artist must be

allowed freedom in the choice of his materials. On the latter, until the Police News be admitted to the honours of poetry, no compromise is possible.

How far is each of these conditions satisfied by Crabbe? To the former, it must be admitted, he gives the loosest of interpretations. His picture of life, at any rate in his earlier writings, is one of gloom almost unrelieved. Even nature herself is clouded by the dominant despair.[1] But what the picture loses in fidelity, it may be said to gain in effect. The effect, doubtless, is not of the highest. But, such as it is, it depends largely on iteration; and it bites the deeper, because it is aimed so persistently at the same mark. On the latter point he is more exacting with himself. It is not from idle curiosity—nor is it, as it has been with some later realists, from a pedantic adherence to method—that he probes so closely into the misery of man. It is from heart-felt compassion, and a conviction that compassion is a vain thing unless it be willing to know and face the worst. Yet even here no one will contend that Crabbe reached the highest; that he held the secret which enabled Wordsworth, for instance, to touch what in other hands would have remained sordid and speechless misery into the noblest tragedy. There is too much of the pathologist about him; perhaps there is too much also of the moralist.

[1] See the descriptions in *The Village* and *The Borough* (The Poor and their Dwellings). But a fine description, in blank verse, of the Fens in winter should be contrasted. The MS. is in the possession of Professor Dowden, but a fragment was quoted in the *Athenæum* of Oct. 31, 1903.

In his own field, however, Crabbe stands almost without a rival. His pathos, his command of the springs of human wretchedness, go very deep. He has touches of true, if commonly rather grim, humour. His knowledge of the harsher side of life and character is without equal since Defoe. Nay, in one or two pieces—almost the only ones, it may be noted, in which he deserts the heroic couplet for a more impassioned metre—he leaves the solid earth, which was his common haunt, and startles us by the strength he shows in the charmed circle of Romance. *The Hall of Justice* and *Sir Eustace Grey* and *The World of Dreams* are not only full of tragic power; they give bodily form to the horror of the supernatural; reminding us, though it may be but faintly, of Browning's *Madhouse Cells*, or, on another side, of the most terrible of all Coleridge's visions, *The Pains of Sleep*. It is only if such poems be overlooked—and, with them, such pieces, more nearly approaching to his usual manner, as *Peter Grimes*—that Crabbe could by any stretch be regarded as a disciple of Pope. And under no circumstances is the parallel anything but misleading.

His relation to romance.

The literary life of Crabbe covered more than half a century, and brought him acquainted with at least two generations of notable men. His first memorable poem, *The Library* (1781), won him the help of Thurlow and the ever-ready friendship of Burke. His next, *The Village* (1783), the first piece in which he found his true manner, was, through the mediation of Reynolds, revised by Johnson, shortly before his

death. Then followed an interval of more than twenty years, broken only by the publication of *The Newspaper* (1785). At the end of this long silence came *The Parish Register* (1807), which was revised by Fox in his last illness; then *The Borough* (1810), the *Tales* (1812), and *Tales of the Hall* (1819). By this time he had won the friendship of many writers of the younger generation, among them Wordsworth; and it is difficult not to suspect a touch of Wordsworth's influence on some of his later poems. Indeed in the *Tales*, and still more the *Tales of the Hall*, both temper and manner are markedly changed from those of the earlier volumes. There is less of the gazetteer about them, and the clouds are broken by more frequent gleams of sunshine. Moreover, their grasp of dramatic truth is much deeper.

Rogers.

The work of Rogers, whether in bulk or significance, is much slighter. His first volume, containing an *Ode on Superstition*, too obviously modelled on Gray, with other poems, was published in 1786. The *Pleasures of Memory* followed in 1792; then the *Voyage of Columbus*, a collection of fragments (1812); *Jacqueline*, in the same volume with Byron's *Lara* (1814); *Human Life* (1819); and, finally, *Italy* (1822-28).

With the exception of *Italy*, nearly all his poetry[1] is in the heroic couplet, polished to an excess of smoothness, but almost entirely free from the antithesis which is too apt to go with smoothness. Of the more flowing form of the couplet he was certainly among the most

[1] *Jacqueline* is in the eight-syllabled couplet.

accomplished masters. As to style and matter, the general effect, though not imposing, is distinctive enough; and this, in spite of the fact that echoes of earlier poets—in particular, of Milton, Pope, and Gray—are almost incessant. The *Pleasures of Memory*, no doubt, suffers from one of those abstract subjects so dear to the soul of Akenside and Hayley; and its attractions are not enhanced by a discourse, happily brief, on the law of association, which is prefixed in prose. But, in the actual execution, it is far more concrete than one could have had any right to expect; it is enlivened by a romantic anecdote, most gracefully told; and, like all the poet's work, though not his table-talk, it is full of tenderness. The same is true of *Human Life*, which is written in much the same vein, and which contains the well-known lines—"Such grief was ours, it seems but yesterday." In his remaining poems, the border into the milder forms of romance is definitely crossed; and, like other poets of the Regency, Rogers pays his tribute to the novel in verse. His best, however, was reserved till last. In *Italy* he strikes into a new metre and an entirely new manner. His blank verse is as limpid as his rhymed couplet; and the greater freedom of its movement, working with other influences, allows scope for qualities of which his poetry had hitherto shown no trace; a keen, and often humorous, observation of life and manners; a clear eye for the significant features of landscape; a power to seize the essentials of historic events or local traditions. His choice of subject, as was perhaps inevitable, at times recalls the later work

of Byron, though it is by no means certain that the greater poet could have claimed priority. In one or two passages, his manner faintly anticipates that of Browning, the Browning of *My Last Duchess*. He has not the dramatic grip of the later writer, but his sense of what is characteristic is sound, as far as it goes, and he has something of the same brevity. The real importance of these affinities is to show that even those who were reckoned as champions of the classical tradition, were carried by the force of their surroundings into the current of Romance.

Campbell.

Campbell, as has been said, struck the classical note, at starting, more frankly than either of the preceding poets. The *Pleasures of Hope* (1799), the subject of which was clearly suggested by Rogers, is perhaps the last poem of any importance written on the classical model. More polished even than its prototype, and with a certain coldness of which that could by no means be accused, it is essentially a glorified prize-poem; and the number of its proverbial lines—one at least of them, alas! pilfered—does not go to clear it of this character. His later poetry is in a curiously different manner, and it gives a far higher impression of his powers. It is almost entirely the work of a romantic poet,—a romantic poet with a turn for battles and sea-fights. *Ye Mariners of England* (1800) and *The Battle of the Baltic* (1805) are ablaze with the spirit of Nelson and his sea-dogs; and, in their own kind, there is nothing equal to them in the language. The *Battle of Hohenlinden*, written between

the two sea-songs (1802), is perhaps still finer as a poem. It is as vivid; it is far deeper in its suggestion of the horrors of battle; and the opening contrast between the calm of nature and the trampling of warriors and the garments rolled in blood strikes a sombre note which is heard again and again to the very close. To the same year belongs *Lochiel's Warning*, which—with a different, though kindred, motive—may be held to dispute the palm with *Hohenlinden*. In his remaining poems he turns to the softer side of romance, and here his best achievement is *Lord Ullin's Daughter*,[1] a ballad finer than any written in that generation of British poets, if we set aside the masterpieces of Scott; yet, even here, there is a beat of the hard, metallic ring from which his poetry is seldom free. A more elaborate venture in something of the same field is *Gertrude of Wyoming* (1809), a red Indian tale, the matter of which is akin to that of Wordsworth's *Ruth*, while its stanza, the Spenserian, was in all probability suggested by *The Female Vagrant*. But neither Wordsworth, nor any other writer, could ever have been eager to claim parentage. For the poem, like the later *Theodric* (1824), is singularly feeble. On the whole, Campbell seems to have left on his contemporaries the impression that his powers were greater than his performance, and that his reputation would have stood higher if he had not been so shy of risking it.

Thus the classical revival, which bulked so largely

[1] Published in 1804; written about the same time as the *Pleasures of Hope*.

in the eyes of Byron, in fact amounted to very little. No one of its authors had any serious quarrel with the romantic tendencies of the time. All of them came to be more and more deeply penetrated by those tendencies as years went on. The use of the heroic couplet was, in truth, the one badge of the alleged reaction; and even that, though for obvious reasons retained to the end by Crabbe, was eventually deserted both by Rogers and Campbell. It is true, however, that the names of those three men mark a certain slackening in the onward movement of romance. We now return to the full tide of that movement with the publication of *Lyrical Ballads.*

Lyrical Ballads.

From Thomson to Burns and Blake the reaction against the ideals and methods of classical poetry had persistently grown in strength. A new world of song had been silently built up, before which the classical models paled into insignificance. But, in the main, the revolt had been carried out in silence. With the exception of Blake, few or none of its authors had troubled themselves to declare open war upon the poetic creed which they denied. The *Lyrical Ballads* (1798), with its successive Advertisements, Prefaces, and Appendices from the hand of Wordsworth (published respectively in 1798, 1800, 1802, 1815), may be regarded as such a declaration. "Both by precept and example" they raise the standard of open revolt against the school of Pope. And that is one of their many claims to mark an epoch in literary history.

With the details of Wordsworth's theory of "poetic diction" we are not concerned. His statement of it was strangely maladroit, and in some respects conveyed an impression exactly the contrary of that which was intended. In appearance, it swept away the distinction between poetry and prose. In reality, it was a plea for the emancipation of poetry; for a riddance of the bondage which had reduced it to something hardly distinguishable from rhymed and stilted prose; for a return to the passion and vividness which the Augustans had banished alike from its language and its thought.

Previous poetry of Coleridge.

This was not the first time that either Wordsworth or Coleridge had appeared in print. Both had been known to the public for some years; and known for qualities which the modern reader finds some difficulty in recognising as their own. Coleridge (1772-1834), whose later poetry is more fastidiously distilled than that of any other Englishman, was notorious for the "turgid ode and tumid stanza," of which Byron was to make sport in his youthful satire. He had, in fact, written nothing better than the *Ode on the Departing Year* (1796) and a considerable number of sonnets, none of which can be said to rise above mediocrity. All these betray the romantic ferment which was working among the younger poets of the time. But they have nothing of the imaginative genius, and nothing of the unerring craftsmanship, which belong to the poems written in and after 1797, the year of his first unbroken intercourse

with Wordsworth, and which were first revealed to the world in the fateful volume of 1798. It is enough to stamp his earlier work that the god of his idolatry at that time was the romantic, but insipid, Bowles.

Influence of Bowles.

Bowles (1762-1850)—if a short account of his work may be inserted here—was a poet whose importance mainly consists in his influence on Coleridge and, to a less degree, on Wordsworth; and it is his earliest work, *Fourteen Sonnets* (1789), ultimately increased to thirty, which earned this distinction. The sonnets are lax in form, but, like all Bowles' poetry, they have an undeniable charm of rhythm. They are, perhaps, too much in the nature of an itinerary; and, with the exception of one on the Cherwell, are strangely lacking in the sense of scenery. But what took Coleridge captive was their obviously romantic intention, and the strain of pensive sentiment—of "mild and manliest melancholy," as he not very aptly called it—which runs through them. The reminiscences of Spenser and of Milton's earlier poems, of Collins and Cowper, which abound in them, are also significant of the poet's bent. In after years, Bowles seems to have come to a fuller consciousness of his own aims and ideals. Some of his later poetry—a description of tropical scenery, for instance, in *The Missionary of the Andes* (1815)—is curiously minute and, what is more, singularly beautiful in its local colouring. And it is the romantic leaning implied in these qualities that prompted him to the attack on Pope (1806) which

so deeply stirred the spleen of Byron. Thus, of the poets actually writing when Coleridge was a youth at school and college, it is intelligible enough that Bowles—for of Burns at that time he seems to have known nothing—should have stood out as the rising hope of the romantic cause.

Previous poetry of Wordsworth.

With Wordsworth (1770-1850) the case is still stranger. It is not merely that his powers were undeveloped, but that they took a direction the very opposite of that which was his true bent. The *Descriptive Sketches* (1793) have all the contortions and all the "glossy, unfeeling diction" of the most extreme disciple of the school of Pope. It is true that both they and the *Evening Walk*, written a few years earlier, contain touches of nature and a sense of the life in nature which foreshadow the real Wordsworth of the *Tintern* poem and the *Prelude*. It was such things which caused Coleridge, then at Cambridge, to conclude that "a new star had risen above the literary horizon." But to most readers it must have appeared that the new poet was mainly remarkable for the most pious devotion to the orthodox couplet, and the most righteous reluctance to call a spade a spade.

Of the work composed in the interval between 1793 and 1797 the public knew nothing. But it is the work which, more than any other except the *Prelude*, bears the stamp of the mental conflict through which Wordsworth passed during the later stages of the French Revolution; and it is the work which gives the key to the achievement of the ten

years of his poetic prime. It consists of three poems, —two of which, at least, are among the most remarkable that he ever wrote,—*Guilt and Sorrow* (part of which survives, under its original form, in the *Female Vagrant*), written at intervals between 1791 and 1794, *Lines left under a Yew-tree* (1795), and *The Borderers*, his one excursion into the drama (1795-96). All these are full of the sense of mystery in nature, of the tears in human things, which form the groundwork of his later poetry. And they ring with an indignant pity for "what man has made of man," which, if it has not altogether faded out of his later work, has at least left little more than a softened echo. It is significant, moreover, that they have little or nothing of that exaggerated simplicity of diction, which was to raise the hue and cry against the poems of 1797 and 1798.

Design of Lyrical Ballads.

Thus, to the world at large, the *Lyrical Ballads* came as a revelation. The *Ancient Mariner* on the one hand, the *Tintern* poem, the *Female Vagrant*, the *Yew-tree*, and some of what may fairly be called the "dramatic lyrics" on the other, struck notes which were entirely new to English poetry. It was inevitable that the first impression should be one of contrast between the two writers rather than of resemblance. The one is the incarnation of the romantic spirit; the other, to all appearance, was the most uncompromising of realists. It is well, therefore, to remember that what Coleridge rather insists upon is the essential unity of aim, which lay behind these divergences of method and manner;

and that, while professedly describing the object he had proposed to himself in the *Ancient Mariner*, he insensibly uses the same terms which, in the next breath, he applies specifically to the poetry of Wordsworth.[1] This is said without prejudice to the glaring differences which undoubtedly exist between the two poets. But it serves to recall a side of Wordsworth's genius which has too often been allowed to drop out of sight.

The value of Wordsworth's contribution to the little volume has been hotly contested. About that of Coleridge there can be no manner of doubt. Nor can there be any doubt about the particular quality of imagination which it displays. With the *Ancient Mariner* we are in the full tide of the romantic triumph. Scenery, colouring, supernatural motive, the rapidity of the action, the fiery touch with which the successive images are burnt into the brain of the wedding-guest—and which of us has not stood in his place?—all these are of the quintessence of romance. Apart from certain passages of Keats, there is no poem in the language—there is none, perhaps, in the literature of Europe—so instinct with all that is deepest and truest in romance as this ballad. Compare it with such a poem as Bürger's *Lenore* or the *Kehama* of Southey; compare it even with the *Isabella* of Keats, and we see at once how Coleridge has instinctively turned away from all that is merely external or mechanical in the romantic armoury, and has thrown himself boldly

Ancient Mariner.

[1] See *Biographia Literaria*, chap. xiv. (1817).

upon the weapons of the spirit. Even the supernatural horror, poignant as it is, is in no sense an end in itself. The heart of the poem lies in the "dramatic truth of the emotions" which an experience so unearthly could not fail to awaken, "supposing it to be real"; the experience of the "soul that hath been alone on a wide, wide sea," haunted by the curse of the spirit-world, surrounded by the bodies of those his own act had brought to death. The removal of the more material touches of horror in the later draft of the ballad is evidence, if further evidence were needed, of the true intention of the poet.

Coleridge's other poems.

The other romantic poems of Coleridge — *Kubla Khan*, *Christabel*, and *The Dark Ladie* with its prelude, *Love*—were written within a few years, for the most part within a few months, of the *Ancient Mariner*. The two former, and more characteristic, pieces may be said to sever the strands which are intertwined in the *Ancient Mariner*. *Kubla Khan* has all, and more than all, the vivid colouring and the haunting glamour of the great ballad. *Christabel*[1] refines still further upon the subtlety of its dramatic suggestion, and surrounds the supernatural theme with a haze of mystery which stands out in sharp contrast against the more direct and, as it has seemed to some, the cruder methods of the earlier poem. Moreover, in the verse of the earlier poem there is little or nothing of the calculated delicacy of movement, the

[1] Part I., 1798. Part II., 1800.

variation with each varying mood of thought or feeling, which runs from end to end of *Christabel*. It is inevitable that the latter should have the defects of its great qualities. The atmosphere throughout is more confined. The iron gate of the Gothic castle, the filigree work of the lady's chamber, are poor substitutes for the boundless horizon and the wide sea, of which the Mariner himself seemed to have become a living part. "I pass like night from land to land,"—there is nothing in *Christabel* which strikes so deep as this. The supernatural theme, which forms the groundwork of both poems, is here presented under the narrower associations of time and place; and Coleridge approaches perilously near to the province which Scott and Southey were making, or soon to make, their own. It is perhaps needless to seek a reason why any work of Coleridge's was left unfinished; that was the normal fate of everything to which he set his hand. But in this case it may well be that the superhuman effort to escape from the trivial round of romance, as trodden by these and other writers, proved too great a burden even for the genius which had conceived and perfected the *Ancient Mariner*. Finished or unfinished, the second part of *Christabel*, if we except, as we are entitled to do, the great ode on *Dejection* (1802), was practically the swan-song of that marvellous genius. After 1802 a few fragments—some of them, truly, of supreme beauty — were all that it gave forth.

Of Wordsworth's contributions to the *Lyrical*

Ballads it is necessary to distinguish three several groups. The first of these, the two poems written prior to his meeting with Coleridge, has been noticed already. The second, the "lyrical ballads" properly so called, is that which gave discriminating colour to the whole volume, and, enforced as it was by the provocative Advertisement, excited the fury of Jeffrey and the later critics. The third, containing the *Lines written above Tintern* and some four or five other poems, is that which for the first time revealed Wordsworth as the "poet of nature."

Wordsworth's contributions.

With the poems of the second group must be taken *Peter Bell*, which, though not published till more than twenty years later, was, like them, written in the early part of 1798. It has the honour of being one of the best abused poems in the language. But on Wordsworth's ideals in poetry, as they then were, it throws a searching light; for, as Professor Raleigh has justly pointed out, it is, and was clearly designed to be, the Wordsworthian counterpart to the *Ancient Mariner* of Coleridge. This group — with one or two later pieces, such as *Alice Fell* — stands by itself in the poetry of Wordsworth. He here takes up the theme of human suffering and endurance which he had already handled in *Guilt and Sorrow*, and which, as he himself insisted, was always to remain "the haunt and the main region of his song." But he takes it up with too much of a set purpose; and he revels in limitations of diction,

Poems of man.

theme, and circumstance which must be admitted often to have laid heavy shackles upon his genius. The *Anecdote for Fathers* and the *Idiot Boy*, old Farmer Simpson and Goody Blake—what have these to do with the "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings," or indeed with any conceivable definition of poetry? But, after all, the worst that can be said against them has been forestalled by Wordsworth himself. "I may have given to things a false importance, I may have sometimes written upon unworthy subjects. . . . My language, too,"—and this he is still more ready to admit—"may frequently have suffered from those arbitrary connections of feelings and ideas with particular words and phrases from which no man can altogether protect himself." This surely is in itself enough to disarm criticism. And, if it be objected by the profane that this did not lead him, until years had passed, to suppress or alter any of the offending passages, the answer is that it would have been well if poets had always shown the same dignity in the face of critics. Wordsworth was right in holding that, "where the understanding of an author is not convinced," such changes cannot be made "without great injury to himself. For his own feelings are his stay and support; and, if he set them aside in one instance, he may be induced to repeat this act till his mind shall lose all confidence in itself, and become utterly debilitated."

And, when all abatement has been made, what a world of imagination is opened by *The Thorn*, or if

obvious blemishes be held to put that poem out of court, by *The Mad Mother*, *The Forsaken Indian Woman*, and *We are Seven*. When had this note been struck before in English poetry, and when has it been struck since? What other poet has seized with so close a grip the stern tragedy of the country-side, the bond which binds man in his suffering to nature, the force which drives him to seek both balm and poison in the scenes where misery has fallen on his life? The very austerity of the language—though there are passages, especially in *The Thorn*, where austerity is by no means the dominant quality—is suited, as more ornate language could never have been, to the severity of the theme. This, and not its supposed identity with the language of the "middle and lower classes of society," is its true justification. It is true that, in this respect as in others, the poet has not yet gained absolute mastery of his weapons. It was not until the poems of the two following years that he found himself completely.

Pastorals.

Compare the poems written during or after his visit to Germany (1798-99), and we are at once conscious of the difference. In *Lucy Gray* and *Ruth* (1799), in the *Leech-gatherer* (1802), or the *Affliction of Margaret* (1804), there is the same austerity of thought and imaginative touch. But the crudeness of the earlier poems, their insistence on outward circumstance, has vanished; and there is a dainty grace of language and of rhythmical movement which is a new thing in the form of Wordsworth's poetry, and which exactly

renders the change that had come over its spirit. His grip of facts is not loosened; his stern presentment of them is hardly softened; but, with diction and rhythm, both are idealised and transformed. The same thing, but with a difference, is true of the three *Pastorals* (1800), though it must be remembered that one of them, the Story of Margaret,[1] was in part composed before the year of the *Lyrical Ballads*, at the same period as the *Yew-tree* and *Guilt and Sorrow*. Written in blank verse, they necessarily differ, both in diction and in rhythmical quality, from the more lyrical pieces to which, in subject, they belong. But nowhere has Wordsworth grasped the tragedy of peasant life more closely, nowhere has he handled it with more poignant fidelity, than here. In the two greatest of these poems, in *Margaret* and *Michael*, there are pages, there are single lines, which have gathered into themselves the crushing, speechless sorrow of years.

Poems of 1799.

If the six years following his return from France (1792-98) form the turning-point in the history of Wordsworth's inward growth, it is 1799 which is the crucial year in the development of his poetic powers. To that year belong, beside the pieces already mentioned, the *Poet's Epitaph* and the series of poems concerning the ideal Lucy. And it is in them that, if we except the *Tintern* lines and one or two of the nature-poems in *Lyrical Ballads*, his genius first shows itself in its full strength; unshackled by the defiant theory

[1] It is to be found in the first book of *The Excursion*.

of the previous year, untroubled by the breath of realism which that theory had carried in its train. The "sojourn among unknown men," though it has been set down as barren of results, did that inestimable service to the poet. It gave to the life and scenes, among which his spirit never ceased to linger, just that touch of remoteness which, to so brooding a genius as his, was the one thing needful before they could be lifted from the region of bald fact into the golden light of the ideal.

But it is time to return to the third and last group of poems contained in the *Lyrical Ballads*, the poems of nature. In this field, it need hardly be said, Wordsworth is at least as original as in his poetry of man. And in this field, as we have seen, he reached his full strength, he found the secret of complete harmony between thought and expression, between form and matter, earlier than in the other. In no poem that he ever wrote is he more true to himself, in none is the correspondence between form and substance more spontaneous and absolute, than in the *Lines written above Tintern*, and *In Early Spring*, in *Expostulation and Reply*, and the companion piece, *The Tables Turned;* or, finally, in the poem beginning "It is the first mild day of March." Within the next few years these poems may have been equalled. But it is certain they were never surpassed.

Poems of nature.

What, then, is it that Wordsworth did for the poetry of nature? Wherein lies his strength as the poet of nature? He opened for man a new bodily sense, and

he opened for him a new spiritual sense. And through these two channels—but, in the last resort, the two merge into one—he brought man nearer to nature than any other poet has done, before or since. It is not only that his eye for the "outward shows of sky and earth" was marvellously keen; in this he may have been rivalled, and even excelled, by later poets—poets who, like Coleridge, had trained their vision by his. It is not even that these things came to him charged, merely as outward shows, with a deeper significance than they have borne to others. It is that behind the outward forms of nature he was conscious of an abiding spirit, full of joy itself and an ever-flowing fountain of joy for the man who, "in a wise passiveness," has schooled himself to "see into the life of things," for the heart that is willing "to watch and to receive."

Wordsworth's joy in nature.

It is this "deep power of joy" which Wordsworth found in nature, and which he brought to nature, that makes his secret and his strength. It is this, as Coleridge saw,[1] that gave "the strong music in his soul" and in the inspired moments of his utterance. And it is just this joy which has remained an impenetrable mystery to so many of his critics, who have persisted in regarding the utterances of such inspired moments as "half-playful sallies"; "charming" as mere "poetry," but, if taken seriously, no better than the

[1] See the Ode on *Dejection*, which was originally addressed to Wordsworth. Hence the allusion at the end to the "little child" (*Lucy Gray*), afterwards unhappily transferred to Otway.

ravings of a fanatic. Wordsworth, however, knew precisely what he meant; so do those — certainly not a diminishing, probably an increasing, number —for whom he wrote. He knew with certainty that joy is at once the mainspring and the crown of all human effort. He knew with no less certainty that nothing can keep the heart of man so open to the visitings of joy, that nothing can strengthen so deeply his power to receive it, as the habit of communion with nature. Hence there is no playfulness, there is literal truth, in the assertion so often challenged—

> "One impulse from a vernal wood
> May teach you more of man,
> Of moral evil and of good,
> Than all the sages can."

It is not only that, in the presence of nature, all that is base or sordid in the heart of man sinks rebuked. It is that, in her presence, his "soul is tuned to love" and joy; that, in her life and beauty, he has glimpses of the same Spirit whose working he knows also in himself; the Spirit

> "Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
> And the round ocean, and the living air,
> And the blue sky, and in the mind of man."

Personal note in these poems.

In one form or another, such instincts are the common heritage of humanity. They are implicit in some of the oldest poetry; they lie at the root of primitive mythology. And, if they find their fullest expression in some dozen

poems of Wordsworth, it is because what others have seen as in a glass darkly to him was as clear as daylight; what others have known only in exceptional moments was to him matter of daily, hourly experience. It is true that he had the gift of poetic utterance which is denied to others. But it is also true that this gift was strangely limited in its operation,—limited to those matters in which his own heart was strongly stirred. And, wherever we find him rising to his full height as a poet, we may be very sure that he had felt deeply as a man. Whatever may be the case with other poets, of Wordsworth at any rate it is certain that he sang well of nothing save what he himself had lived. It would be hard to name any singer who has so thrown his very heart and soul into his poetry, whose best song is so completely the reflection of himself. And that perhaps is the reason why those who have felt his poetry at all have felt it with so passionate—and, it must be added, at times so indiscriminating—a devotion. They have felt that it touched not only their imagination, but the deepest springs of their life. And, as men will with their sacred books, they have come to regard every chapter as inspired. In fact, there are few poets with whom inspiration is so fitful. But, if there be any theme on which he seldom sinks below the best, it is the healing, gladdening power of nature.

Patriotic sonnets.

The bulk of what is vital in Wordsworth's poetry, at whatever time it may have been written, falls under the two heads which have been considered in connection with the *Lyrical*

Ballads. It is the poetry either of peasant life or of external nature. There is, however, one group which stands entirely apart. That is the Sonnets, inspired by the struggle against Napoleon, and composed between 1802 and 1807. They open with the sonnet on *The Extinction of the Venetian Republic*, "Once did she hold the gorgeous East in fee," and they close with that on the subjection of Switzerland, "Two voices are there"; an opening and a close worthy of the noblest scroll of patriotic poetry in our language.

The link which binds the "Sonnets on national Independence" to the main body of Wordsworth's poetry is not difficult to seize. In reaction against the reasoned ideals of the French Revolution, and still more against the arid pedantry of Godwin, he had thrown himself on the primitive instincts of the human heart; those instincts which are "permanent" just because they are "obscure and dark"; which defy all change just because they admit of no reasoned explanation; and which "have the nature of infinity." Among these instincts are those which he took for the theme of the Pastorals and the Lyrical Ballads. Among them also is the love of country; the passion, above reason and contemptuous of consequences, which drives men to fight for the hills and streams among which they were born, for the tradition which has been handed down to them from generation to generation. The thought of country was dear to Wordsworth in itself. It was perhaps dearer yet because in national freedom he saw the only safe-

guard for all that he held dearest in man's nature: the home and all the affections which twine around it; the sense of brotherhood which binds neighbour to neighbour by a thousand associations of scenes familiar to them from childhood; the "natural piety" which nerves the will to endure the hardest blows of fate. And, as it is in the smaller communities that these bonds are felt most closely, so it is with them that his sympathies are keenest: with the peasants of Biscay and the Alps; with those who followed Hofer to defend the mountains and villages of the Tyrol. The patriotism of Wordsworth, if, on the one hand, an universal patriotism,—for it is not bounded by passions, still less by interests, peculiar to any one nation,—is, on the other hand, essentially local. It springs from the same roots as his passion for the country-side and the stern pathos which hangs around its homesteads. In the noblest of all these sonnets, the sonnet on Switzerland, it is interwoven with memories of the ocean and the mountain-floods which he had sung as the poet of nature.

Later poems.

After 1807 the inspiration of the poet flagged, though he continued to write till within a few years of his death, and as late as 1825 rose once at least to a level not immeasurably below his best. But, with a few such exceptions, it is true to say that what counts in his work was all crowded into the fifteen years following his return from France (1793-1807); and that, if he had died at the same age as Byron, the world, except for the nobility of his life, would not

have been sensibly the poorer. When, in 1843, he was made Laureate, it was with no expectation that he would fulfil the duties of the post; and he was mercifully spared the humiliation of New Year Odes, of Threnodies, of Royal Progresses, which his predecessor, Southey, had obediently turned out. The Crown honoured itself yet more than him by the appointment; and we are free to forget that he was ever anything but the poet of humanity and nature.

Reverting to the modest volume which first revealed his greatness and that of Coleridge to those who were capable of judging, we have now only to ask what was its bearing upon the literary movement of the time.

Attitude of the public to Coleridge

As to the place of Coleridge in that movement there can be no manner of doubt. He was, heart and soul, the poet of romance. The first page of the *Ancient Mariner* was enough to establish that beyond all possibility of dispute. It is, however, tolerably clear that to romance of this order the public of 1798 was not only indifferent, but hostile. There seems to be some truth in Wordsworth's complaint, though he was perhaps the last man who could gracefully make it, that the "failure" of the *Lyrical Ballads* was, at least in part, due to the unpopularity of the *Ancient Mariner*. Even so friendly a judge as Lamb "disliked all the miraculous parts of it"; Southey, like the public, would have none of it. Strangely enough, it was *Christabel*, with its far subtler cadences and its far greater elaboration of romantic effect, that first won the suffrages, at least of the initiated. Here, as

we have seen, Coleridge in some respects followed the beaten road of romance more nearly than in his earlier effort. And we can hardly be wrong in supposing that it was this rather than its more elusive qualities that caught the fancy of men like Byron and Scott. However that may be, it is certain that in its unpublished state *Christabel* made a deep impression upon both these poets, and its influence on the *Lay of the Last Minstrel*, on a famous passage of *Childe Harold*, and, in spite of the author's disclaimer, on the opening lines of the *Siege of Corinth*, is apparent. Franked by such sponsors, *Christabel*, when at last published (1816), met with a far more cordial reception than its predecessor, though the *Edinburgh* and the *Examiner*, perhaps the critics in general, still retained their contemptuous frown. But the hour of Romance was now fully come, and the phantom ship of Coleridge was towed into harbour by the rougher craft of Byron and Scott.

and Wordsworth.

Something of the same hesitation was shown by the public of the day in making up its mind about Wordsworth. The cry of childishness and affected singularity seems to have been an afterthought, largely the invention of Jeffrey, who, however, did not deliver sentence until 1807. At the moment of publication the test-poems seem to have passed without serious challenge. The reviewers—and Fox, in his letter of 1801, was substantially at one with them — spoke with some benevolence of *The Thorn*, *The Idiot Boy*, and even of *Goody Blake*. On the other hand, the far greater

poems, those which came from the writer's very heart, were left almost entirely without notice—"It is the first mild day of March" and the lines above Tintern; just as Fox, in the letter referred to, was forced to admit his indifference to *Michael* and *The Brothers*. After Jeffrey had spoken the tide turned heavily against Wordsworth, and for many years, though his influence must steadily have grown with the discerning few, his name to the general public was a byword.

Wordsworth's realism.

And in a certain sense that public deserves our sympathy. For even now the position of Wordsworth is not altogether easy to determine. So many strands mingle in his genius that it is hard to disentangle them. The vein of realism which appears in the Ballads of 1798 has been sometimes taken for more than it is worth. The truth is that after that year it sinks beneath the surface, and in his later poetry hardly requires to be reckoned with. Moreover, alike in intention and in method, it is something very different from such realism as Crabbe's. The latter is so intent on the misery of life, that he has small attention left for the nobler qualities it calls out. His eye is fixed so rigidly on the sordid side of man's lot, that he fails to see the light which touches and irradiates it. Hence, in order to drive home the squalor of things, he tends to multiply details, till the imagination, so far from being roused, is fairly stunned by their importunity. He paints one corner of the wood rather than the whole, and he paints that one corner so minutely that the wood can hardly be seen for the

trees. The fault of Wordsworth, on the other hand, is not over-minuteness, but irrelevancy, of detail. His choice of subject, when most ill-judged, is prompted not by love of squalor but by a belief, mistaken enough in some cases, that he had found the secret of touching common things to the finer issues of imaginative interpretation. His "realism," in fact, needs to be fenced round with so many qualifications that, strictly speaking, it cannot be called realism at all.

His romance.

Again, there is beyond dispute a strain of romance in the genius of Wordsworth. But here, too, it is necessary to distinguish. His romance is never that of the supernatural; nor, again, is it the romance of stirring incident or adventure. "The moving accident is not my trade" — the whole body of his poetry bears witness to the truth of this confession. And though he had a curious art in suggesting supernatural effects, he is punctilious in avoiding the use of supernatural machinery. *Peter Bell* and, to take less disputable instances, the opening scene of *Guilt and Sorrow* and more than one passage in the earlier books of the *Prelude*, are proof positive how easily he might have surrendered himself to supernatural influences, had not his will been firmly set against it. As it is, such passages stand by themselves in rendering the sense of supernatural awe which has none but purely natural causes to inspire it.

But if the romanticism of Wordsworth does not lie in adventure nor—save with the limitations just indicated—in the supernatural; if it does not lie in a

genius for evoking the past nor in the magic which calls before us the men and scenes of distant lands; what direction, it may be asked, is there left for it to seek? The answer is that, though he does not, like Scott, live habitually in the past, and though his imagination does not instinctively turn, as that of Moore and Byron turned, to remote regions, yet there is no poet who, on occasion, has more truly rendered the innermost feeling of the past; there is none, at the rare moments when the impulse took him, who has portrayed so vividly, if not the human passions, at least the natural sights and sounds of a far country. Where shall we find the martial note of the Middle Ages more boldly struck than in the opening passage of the *Feast of Brougham Castle?* Where the wistful memory of the last struggles of a dying race more faithfully echoed than in the song of the Reaper, mourning

> "For old, unhappy, far-off things,
> And battles long ago"?

Again, the "crackling flashes" of the Northern Lights in the *Forsaken Indian Woman;* the nightingale chanting "to weary bands of travellers" in the oasis of the desert; the cuckoo "breaking the silence of the seas Among the farthest Hebrides"; the white doe gliding through the ivied arch; the "fairy crowds of islands" in the boundless lakes of Canada; the tropical forests of Georgia, and the trailing wreaths of scarlet blossom that "cover a hundred leagues and seem To set the hills on fire"—what are all these but the very essence of romance? It is true that in most

or all of these poems some turn is ultimately given which, of set purpose, takes off the edge of the romantic impression. But the romance is there, for all that, an element essential to the general effect of the poem, though it may not, and does not, dominate the whole. Nor is it only in the choice of theme or episode for a given poem that the romantic impulse can be traced. It flashes upon us now and again where we should least expect it; in a chance simile or metaphor that has found its way into the most rapt meditations of the poet and betrays the hidden bent of his imagination; in the image of the "pliant harebell swinging in the breeze Of some grey rock," and then torn from its birthplace and "tossed about in whirlwind"; in the line which struck an answering chord in the heart of Lamb, "Calm is all nature, as a resting wheel"; in a score of other instances no less impalpable, but no less unmistakable, than these.

The Prelude.

It is in the *Prelude* (1799-1805) that the romantic strain reveals itself most clearly, and perhaps in its most distinctive form. It is not merely that the spirit of the boyish poet was fed, as he there tells us, on the visions of romance; that he turned by preference, and from the first, to such storehouses of fantasy as the *Faerie Queene* and the *Arabian Nights*. Nor is it merely that his whole youth was passed in an atmosphere of adventure; adventure homely enough, no doubt, in its outward semblance, but charged with all the effects that incidents far more recondite could have had upon his spirit. It is all this; but it is much

more. The sense of awe, to which reference has been made already, played a part in the moulding of his temper and imagination far larger and more significant than it has done with most men, or even with the majority of romantic poets. So that, looking back, he could point to these and like memories as the determining influence upon his growth, and speak of himself as bred "among the shining streams Of fäery land, the forest of romance." It is, of course, true that the visionary strain in his nature was always met and controlled by the sane instinct, the deepest and strongest thing in him, which kept his feet firmly planted on the earth. "I cannot write without a *body of thought*," [1] wailed the great romanticist in one of his early letters, though in after years he learned better. Wordsworth found, and it was his strength to find, the same impossibility to the end of his days; and he would have added that he could neither write nor live without a body of *fact*. Hence the persistent impulse to bring his most airy visions into connection with fact; the craving to embody them, if possible, in abiding realities. It was this that drew him, as a magnet, to the French Revolution. For there, springing straight out of the solid earth, he found "the attraction of a country in romance." There his visions seemed at last to realise themselves—

> "Not in Utopia, subterranean fields, . . .
> But in the very world which is the world
> Of all of us, the place where in the end
> We find our happiness, or not at all."

[1] Coleridge to Southey, December 11, 1794: *Letters*, i. 112.

For, after all, it is neither in romance nor in realism that the true strength of Wordsworth is to be sought. In his most characteristic work he is to be classed with no school, to be described by no literary catch-word. To take the "common things that round us lie," and to show the intrinsic beauty which the "thinking heart" has power to discern in them; to idealise these things not by shedding over them "the light that never was on sea or land," but by drawing out of them the light which belongs to their very nature,—this was the task which he set himself, and this is the task which, in the inspired moments of his poetry, he must be held to have performed. It is a task which clearly has affinities on the one hand with the work of the realist, and on the other with the aims and promptings of romance. But the fusion of the two elements has entirely altered the distinctive character of each. The result is something as different from the bare reproduction of familiar things, which is the mark of realism, as it is from the presentation of a world remote from ordinary experience, which is among the functions of romance.

Southey.

After Wordsworth and Coleridge, but at an immeasurable distance, we naturally come to Southey (1774-1843), who was bound to both by close ties of comradeship and good offices; to Coleridge, it must be confessed, by offices rendered rather than received. His own estimate of his poetry was certainly extravagant; but, no less certainly, it has now fallen into undeserved neglect.

And apart from its intrinsic merits, which are very considerable, it has an importance in the history of the romantic movement which it is unjust to overlook. The metrical experiments of his earlier poetry, his Sapphics and dactylics, have no value, except the undesigned one of provoking the scoffs of Byron and the parodies of Canning. But they at least testify, if in somewhat perverse fashion, to the hatred of traditional shackles which was part and parcel of the romantic temper. And there are other qualities which brought him better luck at the time and made him a conspicuous figure in the romantic revolt. The love of vivid colour and unfamiliar scenery, the passion of adventure, the laboured quest of the supernatural,—all these strike us at the first glance; and they strike us the more, because the shape in which they appear is so curiously crude. What in Coleridge has been passed and repassed through the refiner's fire, in Southey remains to the last as little more than the raw material. The elements, which fused at the magic touch of Coleridge, in Southey stand out obtrusively distinct. The inner spirit of romanticism is, no doubt, largely lost; but the hidden mechanism is laid bare.

This is not to say that in much of his poetry, both early and late, Southey does not succeed in striking the romantic note to excellent effect. He does so in many of his early Ballads (1796-1802), which are based on the popular legends of England, Germany, Spain, and Finland, and of which the best are perhaps *Donica* (Finland), *Rudiger* (a version of the Lohengrin

story), and *Lord William* (English). He does so still more in his Epics, which laid a yet wider area—France, Spain, Wales, America, Arabia, India—under contribution; the best being those devoted to the two last countries, *Thalaba* (1801) and the *Curse of Kehama* (1810). Both these were written—and the same thing is true of *Madoc*—in fulfilment of a design conceived at school, of "rendering every mythology the basis of a narrative poem." Poetry so encyclopædic, and composed in malice so prepense, could hardly be of the best. The wonder is that it should reach so high a level as much of it assuredly does. The truth is that Southey had a lavish command of colour and sentiment, a keen eye for effect and, what has often been sadly lacking to English poets, a genius for telling a story. The adventures of Thalaba are exciting enough; but *Kehama* is one of the most thrilling tales that have ever been told. The more romantic the theme, the better was it suited to the poet's powers. In less fantastic subjects, such as *Madoc*[1] and *Roderick* (1805, 1814), he cannot be said to have won anything approaching to the same success.

The merits of these poems naturally carry with them the corresponding defects. They are too long; the sentiment is often obvious, sometimes misplaced; the colour is not seldom laid on too thick. The poet, in fact, is throughout too much of the showman, deliberately manipulating his resources so

[1] *Madoc* was originally composed before *Thalaba* (1798-99), but withheld for revision and copious additions.

that no single effect shall be lost upon the spectators. This is no less true of some of the ballads; *The Old Woman of Berkeley*, for instance, where the horrors are so overstrained that it might well be mistaken for burlesque; Collier, in fact, much to the author's indignation, described it as a "mock-ballad." So imperfectly had Southey mastered the true meaning of the material in which he worked.

A further illustration of this is to be found in the constant intrusion of elements quite alien to the spirit of romance; above all, in the constant displacement of the poet, and even of the showman, by the moralist. In his eagerness to enforce the teachings of virtue and Christianity, it happens more than once that he gaily throws his far-sought machinery to the winds. When Thalaba hurls the talisman, which was to confound his enemies, down the gulf, he may have acted like a very good Christian—"the Talisman is Faith,"—but he is a very indifferent Mussulman, and a still worse hero of romance. So disputable, with all their flow and sparkle, are the poems on the immortality of which Southey would at any moment have staked all that he possessed. He moves in the outer courts of the romantic temple as one to the manner born; he seldom, or never, penetrates behind the veil.

In his lighter moods he is less assailable; in *Lodore*, and still more in the *March to Moscow* where he drew strength from the very bitterness of his hatred, he found the secret of raising doggerel almost to the level of poetry. His prose, again, to turn to a very different

side of his industrious activity, has many striking qualities. It is nervous, idiomatic, and capable, as at the close of *Nelson*, of real, if somewhat subdued, eloquence. His chief works in this field—apart from the laborious *History of Brazil* (1810-19) — are the *Life of Nelson* (1813), the *Life of Wesley* (1820), and the *Life and Letters of Cowper* (1833-37). The two first of these are skilful, though perhaps not very accurate, portraits of commanding figures; the last, so far as the jealousy of others allowed him to make it so, is a thoroughly sound and workmanlike performance.

Scott.

We turn to a far greater and more unchallenged fame: that of Scott (1771-1832). Born in the year between Wordsworth and Coleridge, Scott is the only writer of that generation whose work rivals theirs in fruitfulness and importance. It is unfortunately only the less enduring part of it that we are concerned with in this volume; his achievement in prose-romance belongs to the following period.

New issues of romance.

Scott divides with Coleridge the chief place among the apostles of romance. The subtler, more impalpable workings of the romantic spirit he leaves on one side; they may almost be said to have lain beyond his ken. But wherever romance touches the outer experience of man, wherever it has shown itself potent to spur him to action or to mould his history, there, whatever shape it may have taken — adventure, heroism, supernatural awe, — Scott was more keenly and more instinct-

ively alive to it than any of his contemporaries —perhaps than any man in the records of literature. And, as could not be said of all his contemporaries, with him the romantic instinct is wholly unforced and unaffected. It is the fusion of these two elements—a craving for what is remote, mysterious, and even fantastic on the one hand, and the practical sense, the love of stir and action on the other—which makes the distinctive colour of his genius, and which, thanks to the magic of that genius, gave an entirely new direction to the whole current of romance. Till the appearance of Scott, it was almost exclusively the subtler, more mystical elements of romance which had come to the surface. It was so with Blake, it was so with Coleridge. With Southey, it is true, the vein of adventure had declared itself; but not in a form which either had, or deserved to have, a wide acceptance. And, obvious as are the affinities between Scott and Southey, the differences are far stronger and more significant. To Southey, adventure was a thing to be sought for its own sake; and the more fantastic, the more highly spiced, the better. To Scott, after his first random beginnings, after the skull and cross-bones had been put aside, adventure was little, unless he had convinced himself that it was adventure which had, or at the least might have, happened in the actual past of history; and nothing, unless it called out the qualities which he most valued in man's nature — energy, courage, loyalty, and the other virtues belonging to the stock of chivalry. To him, romance was bound up with the historical past,

commonly the past of his own country; it was bound up with a very definite ideal of human nature. Both in its source and in its motive power it rested on action and on fact. It was the deeds of the moss-troopers, the clash and strain of Border warfare, that first stirred his imagination. And, though in his later and nobler work the horizon is markedly widened, it was still from the history of his own country, from a past well remembered and still lingering in well-known survivals of the present, that he drew his happiest inspirations. In the phantom world of Blake and Coleridge, in the vagrant inventions of Southey, he could never have been at home.

The Scott of the "Scotch Novels" grew naturally from the Scott of the Border Minstrelsy. It is with the latter, however, that we are exclusively concerned —with the translations, collections, and original poems which fall between 1796 and 1814.

Early work.

The first ventures of Scott were in a strain rather curiously at variance with that which he was to make his own, but none the less significant. These were the ringing versions of Bürger's two most famous ballads, *Lenore* and *The Wild Huntsman* (1796), appropriately contributed to the "hobgoblin repast" spread before the public in Lewis' *Tales of Wonder*. From such fantastic and gruesome subjects he was soon to turn away. But the choice of them for his earliest effort is proof, if proof were needed, of his irrepressible bent towards the world of romance; while in the slightly mechanical devices, and the somewhat metallic ring, of the verse, we are perhaps

entitled to see his equally irrepressible bent toward the world of action and realities. There is certainly much more of the popular ballad in them, there is more of the tramp and crash of the moss-trooper, than there is in the originals of Bürger.

Scott and Goethe.

It was in 1799 that Scott fairly entered on his inheritance. In *Glenfinlas* and *The Eve of Saint John*, his first original poems, he takes his theme from the legends of his own country, in the latter case from places familiar to him from childhood. And though the supernatural still plays a far larger part than in his maturer work, it is in a comparatively subdued key. The translation of Goethe's *Götz* in the same year marks a further step in advance. Here he first reveals the passionate interest in the actual past, the past of the middle ages, which was to inspire all that is most notable in his poetry, and no inconsiderable share of his prose romance. It was through Goethe, the father of mediævalism in Germany, that he first came to a full sense of his own mission. But what in the one was no more than a passing phase, in the other was the passion of a lifetime.

Not that there are not other differences too. For Goethe the middle ages presented a glowing contrast to all that fretted him in the life of his own day. And *Götz*, in its own way, is hardly less of a satire on "this ink-slobbering century" than *Die Räuber*. Of this satiric intention there is no trace in Scott. That the ideals of the middle ages were not those of the eighteenth century, he knew as well as any man.

But it never occurred to him to put the two in competition, and in his picture of the past there is no touch of satire against the present. He is far too much in love with his inward vision to have leisure for comparing it with the realities at his gate. So it comes that he is far more whole-hearted than Goethe in his devotion to the past, and that his picture of it is far more complete. Partly from the necessities of the dramatic form, partly from natural inclination, Goethe fixed on one moment in the death-throes of mediæval life—the struggle of individual freedom against the advancing tide of officialism and routine. Scott gives no such one-sided picture. He includes the whole web of feudal existence—its freedom, its adventure, its romance, its chivalry, its superstition—in his admiration, and finds room for them all in his poetry. And the air, if less charged with tragedy than in Goethe's play, is keener and more bracing.

Minstrelsy.

The first result of Scott's self-consecration to the middle ages was the *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* (1802), over which, with help from Leyden and others, he had been busy for some years. This great collection consists of three parts, historical, romantic, and modern imitations, in the last of which *Glenfinlas* and other ballads by Scott himself are incorporated. It also contains dissertations of great value connected with Border history and the popular beliefs of the Scots. The *Minstrelsy* is avowedly modelled on Percy's *Reliques*. But a glance is enough to show how greatly the standard

of industry and accuracy necessary for such a task had risen in the interval. And the credit of this is largely due to Scott himself.

Three years later began the long series of original romances: *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* (1805), *Marmion* (1808), *The Lady of the Lake* (1810), followed by others of which it is only necessary to mention *The Lord of the Isles* (1814). These were the rich harvest of his preliminary labours, the first free outpouring of the genius which, for the next five-and-twenty years, was to hold the world at his command.

Romances in verse.

The poems have inevitably been, to some extent, overshadowed by the prose-romances. But, as one turns their pages, the old spell comes over one again. The swift action, the sense of free air and sunshine, the vivid if not altogether accurate pictures of nature, the thrill of danger, the stir of battle, the passion of courage and loyalty, the love of country and of countryside, the recurring echo of the supernatural—all these things came from the inmost heart of Scott, and they still speak to the heart of the reader. In the subtler tones of romance he is doubtless lacking. He has not the magic touch, he has not the vivid colour, the command of mystery and of horror, which was the fairy-gift of Coleridge; he has not the poignant sense of "beauty, beauty that must die," which was the birthright of Keats; he has not the profound instinct of "old, unhappy, far-off things" which at moments visited Wordsworth. But these things are perhaps hardly compatible with the qualities which the three

earlier poems at any rate undoubtedly possess. And who shall say that these qualities are not worthy of admiration? It is true that the workmanship of the poems is commonly rough, and that, in particular, the rhythm is for the most part wanting in delicacy—a defect which the obvious echoes of *Christabel* in the opening canto of the *Lay* only throw out into greater prominence. But it must be remembered that, in themes of this kind, anything of "finesse" would have been the most unpardonable of errors; and that, if Scott erred, he erred at least on the right side. It must also be remembered that against the best of his lyrics and lyrical ballads—*Lochinvar*, for instance, or the *Coronach* or *Proud Maisie*, if an example may be taken from the novels—all such criticisms fall powerless to the ground. In the last of these especially the form is perfect, and, quite apart from the dramatic pathos, the lyric note rings out with a clearness which has seldom been surpassed.

After the *Lady of the Lake*, the spring showed unmistakable signs of running dry; and the remaining poems, if not written to order, are too manifestly composed with an eye to the bills of Abbotsford. After the meteoric dawn of Byron (1813-14), Scott good-humouredly owned himself "beaten"; but it was only to turn with unflagging zest to the fresh fields which he had discovered, almost by accident, in the latter year. *Waverley*, laid aside in 1805, was taken up again and finished in the June of 1814. And when Ballantyne came to announce the comparative failure

Waverley Novels.

of the *Lord of the Isles*, he found the author at white heat over the pages of *Guy Mannering*.

The change of instrument and method was in every way for the good. In the cooler element of prose Scott sacrificed little or nothing—unless when he deliberately chose to do so—of the rapidity of action which had been among the chief charms of his poetry. And he gained a field for his consummate powers of pathos, humour, and human sympathy, which he certainly never found, and in all probability never could have found, in his verse-romances. It was now that for the first time he drew from the soil of his own country, a soil formed by slow deposits reaching far back into the past, the rich savour which had hitherto lain there almost unsuspected; that, through local associations and the accidents of history,—associations and accidents which to him were inseparable from the deeper issues of imaginative creation,—he found his way to the enduring passions and the eternal instincts which are everywhere the same. Of all the results, ultimately traceable to the revival of popular poetry and national tradition associated with the names of Percy and Herder, this was the most original and the most precious. And here Scott was not only pioneer, but master without a rival. The work of Wordsworth, on one side of it, has obvious affinities with his; but its origin was different, and it differs also in general effect.

If the rarer qualities in Scott's genius were all his own, its more obvious features establish his kinship

with a whole host of writers both in this country and on the Continent. His affinity with Southey and with Coleridge has already been noted. He was himself the first to own, and chivalrously to exaggerate, his debt to Miss Edgeworth. He pointed the way for Byron. But, above all, he left a profound mark upon the character of the novel. Of the historical novel he was the creator; though, in this country at any rate, he has not been altogether blessed in his successors. Those who have followed most closely in his steps have been manifestly unequal to the task; and those who have best succeeded — Thackeray, for instance, and perhaps George Eliot—have departed the most widely from the methods of their model. A yet more important effect of his influence was to restore to the novel the element of romance. At the time when *Waverley* appeared, the tendency of the novel was to become a mere picture of contemporary manners. This was seen in Miss Austen; it was seen a few years later in Galt. And, in the main, the strength of our novelists has always lain in this direction. It is perhaps thanks to Scott that the door has been kept open for more adventurous spirits. And, though the vein of unalloyed romance has been little worked, in two or three of our subsequent novelists, and those the greatest, it runs through the homelier metal of the groundwork, and transforms it.

Affinities and influence.

If we turn to the Continent, we still find Scott at our side. In Germany his influence is less apparent

than elsewhere; chiefly because the romantic movement had there spent its force before he discovered the true secret of his powers. But it appears in Hauff's *Lichtenstein*, and it is strong on Wilibald Alexis, though he began by burlesquing the author whom in a few years he was to echo. With the romanticists of France and Italy on the other hand, the work of Scott bore incalculable fruit. It is enough to mention *I Promessi Sposi* in the one country, *Notre Dame* and the great romances of Dumas in the other. Even the Drama of both countries owes him a heavy debt. *Carmagnola* and *Henri Trois*, to say nothing of *Cromwell* and *Le Roi s'amuse*, could hardly have been written as they were, had it not been for the historical romances of Scott; and the same is true both of the dramas and the romances of Alexis Tolstoi in Russia.

Moore.

To Moore (1779-1852) the descent is abrupt. Yet there was a time when he almost rivalled Scott and Byron in popularity. Nor is it altogether difficult to understand how this was. His facile talent, astonishing versatility, and ready wit were bound at any time to gain him a hearing; while his overflowing sentiment exactly fell in with the mood of an age which loved the luxury of feeling, but had not learned to feel either strongly or with truth. Moreover, he had an unerring instinct—an instinct born of his keen sociability, and sharpened by it—for playing precisely the tune to which the public was sure to dance; and he owed his vogue largely to tastes which greater men, such as Byron, had

created. The worst defect of his poetry is its want of depth. But when his feelings were deeply stirred, as they were in the *Irish Melodies* and in one or two of the more personal lyrics, he displayed powers of which the rest of his work gives little suspicion.

Apart from two youthful indiscretions, — *Odes of Anacreon* (1800) and *Poems by the late Thomas Little* (1801),—which are now hardly remembered except by the allusions in Byron's letters and *English Bards*, his first notable work was *Epistles, Odes, and other Poems* (1806) which, thanks to its strictures on the United States, gave occasion to his farcical duel with Jeffrey. This was followed in the next year by the first number of *Irish Melodies* (1807-1834). The best of these were inspired by the memory of Robert Emmet, the noblest and purest of Irish patriots, with whom Moore had formed a devoted friendship in his college days. "When he who adores Thee" and "O, breathe not his Name," among others, are a monument to this affection, and to the love of country with which it was bound up. In these and *The Minstrel Boy*, and others besides, we have the perfection of patriotic poetry, strongly felt and spontaneously expressed. We have also a most melodious rhythm, such as was seldom lacking in Moore's verse, but which here takes a deeper note than usual. The same note makes itself heard, but more seldom, in the *National Airs* (1815), for instance in the *Echo* and "Oft in the stilly Night," which represent the high-water mark of the purely lyric, as distinct from the patriotic, inspiration of

the author. It would be hard to find a simpler or more graceful embodiment of feelings "which find an echo in every heart" than is offered by these poems.

The only other serious work which calls for mention is *Lalla Rookh* (1817), the "magnum opus" on which his fame as poet traditionally rests.[1] In glitter, and easy flow of melody, the poems which form the staple of this collection are incomparable. The eastern atmosphere, at least in its grosser elements, is happily caught; and, in the main, the stories are excellently told. But beyond this there is little to praise. The sentiment is superficial, and it is greatly overcharged. The suggestion of Byron's Tales is too palpable; and the nobler qualities, which lift the *Giaour* and others above the level of the Bazaar and the Harem, are conspicuously absent. There is nothing of Byron's fire and passion; nothing of the "unconquerable will" which makes itself felt even in the earlier and less memorable efforts of "the great Napoleon of the realms of rhyme."

The lighter side of Moore's talent is less open to question. His easy style was exactly suited to the kind of satire at which he aimed; and it is barbed by an unfailing flow of wit. The chief works under this head are *The Twopenny Post-bag* (1813) and the *Fudge Family in Paris* (1817). The former is a series of lively skits upon the Regent and his intimates; the latter, like the *Fables for the Holy Alliance* (1823),

[1] The *Loves of the Angels* (1823) seems never to have been popular, and is now forgotten.

is full of equally lively banter on legitimacy and other fashionable absurdities. The Regent does not seem to have taken the satire much to heart. But it probably did more to discredit him than most of the grosser denunciations of which he was the victim; and, in literary power, none of the heavier artillery can claim to have been a match for the Lilliputian darts of Moore.

From the poets we turn to glance at the history of the Drama, the Novel, and the lighter forms of verse.

Tragedy—Miss Baillie. In Tragedy, apart from those whose chief work was done in other fields, there is but one name of any importance—Joanna Baillie (1762-1851). The fame of this lady, who had a great charm of character, stood very high with her contemporaries, with none more so than Scott. But her dramas, verse and prose, tragedy and comedy, are now almost forgotten. Her earliest plays, *Basil* and *De Montfort*,—the latter has a heroine manifestly drawn with an eye to the majestic presence of Mrs Siddons,—were apparently ranked highest by her admirers. But they are lacking in action, and are concerned too exclusively with the portraiture of certain moods, in both cases rather of a sentimental cast, which the authoress had not the strength to make truly dramatic. Her style, too, though not without gleams of poetry, is commonly borrowed from the traditional frippery of the tragic wardrobe, and it is liable to sink into the merest bathos. Perhaps the chief importance of Miss Baillie

is to have reflected, in a mild form, the romantic tendencies of the period; and that, not only in her sentiment, but in her choice of subject and surroundings. She goes as far as the lower Empire and Ceylon for her plots; and when she returns home, it is to celebrate witchcraft. It is just to mention that in some of her lyrics—for instance, the Shepherd's Song—she strikes a far truer note than she was able to do in tragedy.

The only other tragedies of mark are those written by Coleridge and Wordsworth during their apprenticeship; *Osorio* (written in 1797; recast, acted, and published as *Remorse* in 1812-13) and *The Borderers* (1795-96). Neither *Osorio*, at least in its original form, nor *The Borderers* could claim to be acting plays, though both were offered to the management of one or other of the London theatres. But both contain fine poetry; and both are, in a certain sense, dramatic. The former is conceived and written in the highest strain of romance, not without unmistakable echoes of *Die Räuber*. The scene is cast in Spain, at the height of the Moresco persecution; it abounds in murders, real and supposed, in incantations, dreams, dungeons, and sepulchral caverns. But the merits of the play are independent of these rather naïve expedients. The passages printed in *Lyrical Ballads* as "The Foster-Mother's Tale" and "The Dungeon" are romantic in the truest and best sense; and there are touches of natural detail worthy of "This Lime-Tree Bower my Prison" and *The Ancient Mariner*. What

Osorio.

is more to the purpose, the figure of Osorio himself is finely conceived, though the execution must be admitted often to fall short of the design. The coherence of the play was decidedly strengthened in the later version; but this advantage was more than outweighed by the excision of the poetical passages and the general loss of freshness.

The Borderers.

To the purposes of the stage *The Borderers*, as Wordsworth well knew, was even worse adapted than *Osorio;* for it is almost wholly devoid of action. Nor again has it the charm of language and imagery which belongs to the companion play of Coleridge. Its interest lies solely in the defiant malignity of Oswald, and in the mental struggles of the victim whom he holds in his grasp. Both characters were avowedly suggested by what Wordsworth himself had seen and inferred during his time in revolutionary France; both, on the whole, are drawn with penetrating insight; and the latter, the self-appointed scourge of God, falls little, if at all, short of the demands of tragedy. The play has obvious affinities with *Othello*, which we know to have been "pre-eminently dear" to Wordsworth; it has also, like *Osorio*, certain points in common with *Die Räuber*. But it would be rash to say that either of these was consciously before the mind of the poet when he wrote; nor is the question of much moment. For *The Borderers*, both in its defects and its merits, is a work of striking originality. It reflects, with even more fidelity than *The Prelude*, the working of the poet's mind at the chief

crisis of its growth; and it is steeped through and through with the instincts and convictions which, mellowed by further thought and experience, were to colour the whole body of his subsequent poetry. Even in the history of the drama this play is not without significance. It is a marked instance of the tendency, which is to be traced so clearly in the best dramatic work of the last hundred years, and which, with all its dangers, is perhaps the best sign of promise for the future,—the tendency to lay stress not on outward action but on "the incidents in the development of a soul." In this sense *The Borderers* has some analogy with *Don Carlos* and *Iphigenie;* it points the way to *Luria* and *Colombe's Birthday.*

Comedy.

In comedy, during these thirty years, there are three names of note, and one of enduring distinction. These are Richard Cumberland (1732-1811), George Colman the younger (1762-1836), Holcroft (1745-1809), and Sheridan (1751-1816). The first of these may be regarded as the chief representative of sentimental comedy; while Sheridan and, in a less degree Colman, were its sworn foes. The best-known plays of Cumberland are *The Brothers* (1769), *The West Indian* (1771), *The Jew,* and *The Wheel of Fortune.* It is the two latter of these which have earned him the doubtful fame of sentimentalist; and to *The Jew,* in particular, the mocking homage offered in *Retaliation* is entirely applicable. *The West Indian* and *The Wheel of Fortune* are much better plays. The plot of the former, though certainly improbable, is ingeniously constructed; and the latter

contains an excellent character, Penruddock. It is, however, chiefly his connection with sentimental comedy, and the consequent antagonism of Goldsmith and Sheridan—he is credibly believed to have sat for the portrait of Sir Fretful Plagiary—which give him importance. Colman, who began with serious drama, wisely soon turned to comedy, his best plays being written between 1797 and 1805. His comic vein, if not deep, is genuine enough; so is his pathos; and, at his best, he unites the two in scenes and characters which are truly humorous. He does so in *John Bull*, and still more in *The Poor Gentleman*. The latter contains two figures which are clearly suggested by my Uncle Toby and Corporal Trim; but they are drawn with a completely original touch, and woven into a plot which moves on from beginning to end with an unflagging gaiety. Of his purely comic characters, the best are Dr Pangloss in *The Heir at Law*, and Ollapod in *The Poor Gentleman;* the latter being conceived and executed in a manner which owes something to Smollett and faintly anticipates Dickens. The third and last of these dramatists is Holcroft, now chiefly remembered as author of *The Road to Ruin* (1792), which, though slightly overdone in sentiment, is indisputably dramatic, as well as excellently fitted for the stage; and it contains one character, Goldfinch, the horsey young spark, who is a truly comic creation. With *Anna St Ives* (1792) and other romances, Holcroft also enters into the history of the novel. And his autobiography, completed by Hazlitt, is a book of surprising interest.

Beggar, pedlar, stable-boy, shoemaker, tutor, translator, actor, playwright, novelist, politician—he led a life of extraordinary activity. Included in the ill-judged prosecutions for high treason of 1794, he was discharged, in entire default of evidence; and, on this side, he is, as a man, the most interesting representative of that phase of opinion which reappears, under very different forms, in Godwin and Bage.

Sheridan.

The dramatic activity of Sheridan was begun and ended within five years; from 1780 onwards his fitful energies were thrown into politics. His fame rests solely upon three plays, all written before he was thirty: *The Rivals* (1775), *The School for Scandal* (1777), and *The Critic* (1779). But Byron, if the application of his remark may be slightly altered, and if one may suppose him to have spoken only of his own generation, was clearly right in saying that each of these was "the best of its kind": the *Rivals* in that sort of comedy which borders upon farce; the *School* in pure comedy; and the *Critic* in burlesque. Like Goldsmith's plays, all three bear strong marks of reaction against the false sentiment which, in Kelly, Cumberland, and others, threatened to swamp the English stage. And, as Goldsmith's plays do not, the *School for Scandal*, at any rate, goes back, though hardly to the extent alleged by Lamb, to the "artificial comedy" of Congreve for its model. In the *Rivals*, it is true, the vapid episode of Julia and Falkland was thrust in, as a concession to the false taste of the time; but it is done with the worst

possible grace, and the whole strength of the author is thrown into the light comedy of the main plot and the sparkling characters which support it. It is nothing to say that Sir Anthony and Mrs Malaprop are a reminiscence of *Humphrey Clinker*. Their first suggestion may have been taken from that source; but it is bettered in the taking. And if the latter cannot be said of Bob Acres, who has been accused of descent from Sir Andrew Aguecheek, he is man enough to do credit to his parentage. The *School for Scandal* is, doubtless, a more ambitious effort. The element of farce is gone; the wit is yet more keenly polished; and the social satire is to the last degree elaborate. The whole machinery of the "school," indeed, seems to have been an afterthought; it may even, when it first occurred to Sheridan, have been designed as the material for a separate play; and, when all is said and done, it remains a question whether the "asps and amphisbænas" of the satire are quite the right company for the airy creations of the comedy. But, if the combination was an error, it is one for which the brightness of the situations, the skill of the portraiture, and, above all, the brilliance of the dialogue, amply atone. There is not the buoyant fun of Goldsmith, nor even of the *Rivals*. There is no character so overflowing with comic humour as Tony Lumpkin or Croaker or Mr Lofty. But in brilliance of style the *School for Scandal* throws everything since Congreve into the shade. The *Critic*, in its first intention, was a satire on such tragedies as Cumberland's *Battle of Hastings*. But, as the

fashions of false tragedy are perennial, it has lost but little of its freshness by lapse of time. And, as a burlesque, it is at least equal to any of its precursors, *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*, *The Rehearsal*, or *Tom Thumb the Great*. With all respect for the brilliant and honourable part which he played in politics, it is impossible not to regret that this should have been the last of Sheridan's literary ventures.

The Novel.

The Novel, it need hardly be said, fills a far larger space than the Drama in the history of the period. It follows two distinct lines of development,—the one starting from the *Castle of Otranto*, the line of romance; the other, and at the moment the more important, carrying on the tradition of Richardson, but tending more and more to eliminate the romantic, and to retain only the more matter-of-fact, elements in the type fixed by *Clarissa* and *Sir Charles Grandison*. The chief names connected with the former are Beckford (1759-1844), Mrs Radcliffe (1764-1823), and Godwin (1756-1836). In the latter all the honours are carried off by women: Miss Burney (1752-1840), Miss Austen (1775-1817), and Miss Edgeworth (1767-1849). Between these must be placed the novelists of sentiment, of whom the most notable is Mackenzie (1745-1831). And in a class by themselves we may set those who wrote mainly for purposes of edification: Hannah More (1745-1833), Mrs Inchbald (1753-1821), and Bage (1728-1801).

Romance had entrenched itself securely in poetry

long before it made conquest of the novel. Not that invasion was not frequently attempted; but, from lack of genius or other causes, in every case it was doomed to failure. The first of these ventures was made by Beckford, son of the famous alderman who bearded the king and was among the chief supporters of Chatham. *Vathek*, the young millionaire's one effort in serious fiction, was written in 1782, and written in French. The translation, made more or less with the author's co-operation, was first published, but without his sanction, in 1786. The inspiration of this remarkable book is certainly French, rather than English. Its subject is clearly suggested by the eastern tales, so popular in France at the end of the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth century. It owes something, though not much, to Marmontel; something perhaps to the *Lettres Persanes;* and more, especially in its earlier pages, to the "philosophical" tales of Voltaire. In English literature it was, therefore, an exotic, and that, rather than any lack of brilliance, must be held to account for its comparative failure. It seems to have passed almost unheeded by a generation more engrossed in admiring its own portrait than in the fantasies of the East; and it was reserved for the age of Byron to acknowledge its merits. The imagination of the book is, in truth, extremely striking; and it is of a typically romantic cast. The oriental splendours of the Caliph's palace of pleasure are painted with the zest of one born to

Romance— Beckford.

the purple; the world of Djinns and Ghouls and enchanters, with the ardour of one who has almost persuaded himself to believe in them. And through it all, there are flashes of mockery hardly less sudden than Voltaire's; the mockery of the sceptic who rejoices in turning his own creations into ridicule; the mockery of the voluptuary who knows in his heart that all is vanity. At the close, however,—and it is only then that he rises to his full power,—all mockery is thrown aside; and the doom of the Caliph, his punishment in the hall of Eblis, is told with a dæmonic fury which has seldom been surpassed. But it was not until a generation had gone by that any of these things found an echo.

Mrs Radcliffe.

With Mrs Radcliffe the case is almost the reverse. Her powers were far inferior to Beckford's; but, such as they were, they secured fame for her at once. Her chief works belong to the last decade of the century—*The Sicilian Romance* (1790), *The Romance of the Forest* (1791), *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), and *The Italian* (1797). Her name is now little better than a bye-word. But in her day she was probably the most popular of romance-writers; and a generation later, Byron boldly mentioned her in the same breath with Shakespeare. And, extravagant as such an estimate is, she was not only a marked figure in her own time, but, as pioneer, she played an important part in the history of the romantic novel. This is true in at least three particulars. She was the first to make sensational incident the staple of the story, and thus, in spite of her

cloying sentiment, she may fairly be regarded as founder of the sensation novel. She was the first, if we except leaders without followers such as Beckford, to employ supernatural, or at the least mysterious, machinery. And she was the first, the above limitation being again understood, to group her incidents round distinctively romantic characters; the first, in particular, to recognise the full virtue of the picturesque, the mysterious, villain. To these, as a point of less but still of considerable importance, it may be added that she was the first, in this country, to make the set description of nature a standing garnish of the novelist's banquet. None of these inventions, however, is worked in other than a most bungling fashion. Her descriptions are monotonous; her sensation is too often a blind passage leading to nothing; her villains, with the possible exception of Schedoni in her last novel, are uncommonly poor creatures; and her supernatural machinery—it was not for nothing that she was a child of the age of reason—is explained away with provoking regularity. Moreover, her local colouring is glaringly at fault. She may cast her scene in Italy or France, in the sixteenth century or the seventeenth. It makes not the slightest difference. Whatever the period, whatever the country, it is the sentiment, it is the social manners of England under George III., that she puts before us. On the whole, she may be said to have rather modelled the scattered limbs of the romantic novel — and that very imperfectly — than to have created it as an organic whole. Even this, however,

was a considerable achievement. And though her influence on individual writers of a later date may have been exaggerated—she has been too unreservedly credited with the parentage of Byron and of Charlotte Brontë—yet there is no doubt that, as romantic and sensational novelist, she was feeling after a notable ideal; an ideal which it required greater genius than hers to attain.

Mackenzie.

Mackenzie stands somewhat apart among the novelists of the time; and he does so, because he combines tendencies which hitherto had existed in separation. His first and best known work, *The Man of Feeling* (1771), is one of the few attempts to carry on the tradition of Sterne. But the attempt is crude, and it may be doubted whether Sterne himself would have recognised the succession. *The Man of the World* (1775) has a dash of Rousseau,—the Rousseau not of *Héloise*, but of the humanitarian propaganda. In *Julia de Roubigné* (1777), a far more powerful novel than either of the foregoing, the star of *Héloise* is in the ascendant. But, as emphatically is not the case in Rousseau's romance, jealousy is the main theme of the story; and it is handled with a tragic ruthlessness which recalls the manner of Calderon rather than of any more northern writer. Certainly, *Julia* has far more of the legitimate romance than either of the earlier stories; and, *Clarissa* apart, it may fairly claim to be the earliest tragic novel in the language. Yet, with curious perversity, it is by his earlier efforts, it is as high-priest

of sensibility, that the world has decided to remember Mackenzie.

Equally hard to class are the novels of Godwin. His first and most famous attempt in this kind, *Caleb Williams* (1794), has certain elements of romance; but its primary purpose is to expose the abuses of society; and its chief interest lies in its command of morbid psychology. It is with his next story, *St Leon* (1799), that he definitely enters the lists of romance, the romance of the impossible; and *St Leon*, fittingly enough, is the parent of *Frankenstein*. The hero of the story is entrusted, under the seal of silence, with the secret of the philosophers' stone and the "elixir vitæ"; and the drift of the resulting romance is to show the misery which such powers would entail, "cutting off the possessor from the dearest ties of human existence and rendering him a solitary, cold, self-centred"—and it might have been added, powerless—"individual." These consequences are grasped and presented with marvellous vividness, and with not more than the due mixture of oblique satire upon the perversity of human nature and the iniquities of superstition. But it must be confessed that Godwin shares with Mrs Radcliffe the incapacity to seize the local and historical atmosphere of the scenes which he sets himself to describe; and that the sentimental opening of the story, which fills one volume out of four, is detestable. Yet, in spite of these defects, *St Leon* is both a notable book in itself and forms a notable landmark in the rough beginnings of the romantic novel, though it is hard to

Godwin.

keep one's countenance over the ingenuous patronage with which, in the advertisement of 1831, he speaks of the subsequent "discoveries" of Scott in this department. *Caleb Williams* has no more than a slight flavour of romance; but it gives a far higher impression of Godwin's imaginative powers. Its first intention, as has been said, is to reinforce the indictment against society which had been launched by *Political Justice* in the previous year, to show that there is one law for the rich and another for the poor. But out of this unmalleable material the arch-anarchist has contrived to fashion what is, in many respects, a dramatic masterpiece. The blind curiosity, which drives Caleb to unravel his master's secret, the subtle interchange of baser and nobler passion in the character of Falkland, the alternation of fascination and repulsion that each exercises upon the other,—this is the central theme of the story; and, if we make due allowance for Godwin's inveterate habit of preaching, it is treated with masterly penetration. As a study of morbid pathology it has few rivals in the language. And it is by this book, if any, that Godwin, as an imaginative writer, still survives.

Novel of manners—Miss Burney.

We turn now from the romantic novel to that of contemporary life. It is by her two first novels, *Evelina* (1778) and *Cecilia* (1782), that Miss Burney takes rank. In *Camilla* (1796) and *The Wanderer* (1814) her hand had lost its cunning; and were it not for the Diary, which retains the old brilliance almost to the last, one might have been half tempted to regard her early

triumphs as a happy accident. The influence of Richardson on her two masterpieces is manifest at a glance; on *Cecilia*, which is written in narrative, still more than in *Evelina*, which retains the letter-form of *Clarissa*. The sentiment, the woes of the oppressed damsel, the hair-splitting on minute points of honour, all bear witness to the first source of Miss Burney's inspiration. And yet, with all her talent for these solemnities, it is easy to see that her heart was never in them as Richardson's had been. What really fascinates her is the strange medley of characters that she meets by the way. Boorish sea-captains, chattering Frenchwomen, irrepressible coxcombs, maniac misers, headlong gamblers, flunkey tradesmen, pompous aristocrats—"the small vulgar and the great"—all these crowd her canvas; all are painted in the most vivid colours and with the most lifelike effect. Caricatures they may be, but it is the caricature of genius; of a genius which, in two or three scenes at any rate, might well have stirred the envy of Dickens. "My little character-monger" Johnson used to call her; and this was to lay his finger upon the secret of her power. There had been nothing quite like it in the previous history of the novel. Smollett had come nearer to it than any other writer; but the figures of Smollett, with all their amazing distinctness, have too much the air of curiosities in a museum. Miss Burney's live and move and gesticulate before us. And this points to what, at bottom, she had in common with Richardson, the power of throwing herself, body and soul, into the world of her imagination; the love of story-telling,

"die Lust zu fabulieren," for its own sake. It is something altogether apart from the eye for absurdities and eccentricities, which is the first thing to strike the reader in her genius; and, without it, her "humours" —to adopt Macaulay's analogy from Jonson—would have been very different from what they are. Give her a commonplace incident, an almost trivial experience, and, with her fabling instinct, she will at once turn it into a novel in brief. It is this which makes the undying charm of the Diary, a Diary rivalled only by that of Pepys. Her life with the equerries and the Schwellenberg, deadly dull as it must have been in the suffering, is as good as a play in the telling. A race with the tide, such as might have befallen any other old lady, becomes under her pen the most thrilling of romances. Her picture of Johnson and his circle is as vivid as Boswell's; her account of the hopes and fears that gathered round the madness of the king is worthy of Saint-Simon or Carlyle. And this quality, no less than the genius for creating humours, is as strong in her novels; at least, in the first and best of them, *Evelina*.

Miss Austen.

Miss Austen found a field entirely her own; but, none the less, she is in the direct descent from Miss Burney; and the very theme of her first novel, *Pride and Prejudice*, — a masterpiece, if there ever was one,—is manifestly suggested by the closing chapter, and, indeed, by the whole tenour, of *Cecilia*. None of her books was published until 1811; but the three first were written before the end of the century — *Pride and Prejudice* in

1796-97 (published 1813); *Sense and Sensibility* in 1797-98 (published 1811); *Northanger Abbey* in 1798 (published 1817). Then followed a long break, at the end of which came *Mansfield Park* (1814), *Emma* (1816), and *Persuasion* (1817).

In treatment, as well as in subject, *Pride and Prejudice* stands much nearer to Miss Burney than any of the later novels. Some of the characters, though doubtless more delicately drawn than the corresponding figures in *Evelina* or *Cecilia*, have an undeniable touch of caricature, and that is more than could be said of anything in *Mansfield Park* or *Emma*. The vein of satire, it is true, always remained. Once, in *Northanger Abbey*, it took the form of good-humoured burlesque on the romantic machinery of Mrs Radcliffe; more commonly it appears only in the keen sense of human foibles, in the penetrating but subdued humour, which is the seal of all that is most characteristic in her work, and which is written at least as legibly upon her features. To such a temper romance of any kind, whether of circumstance or sentiment, could hardly fail to be distasteful. And, except as an object of more or less pronounced satire, it is rigidly excluded from Miss Austen's novels. It is all sense, and no sensibility, with her; until, by a turn highly characteristic of her well-balanced humour, she suddenly bethinks herself, in *Emma*, to demolish the golden image of all the practical virtues which she had set up in her previous heroines. Yet, even here, there is no attempt to exalt the more romantic qualities; the weak side of the managing

temperament is shown, and that is all. From all this it is clear that the range of her novels is strictly limited, and it is so of set purpose. It is among the highest marks of her genius that she knew precisely where her powers lay, and that nothing, not even the hint of a Regent's wishes, would induce her to move one step from the path which they manifestly pointed out. The province that she took for herself was the uneventful life of the country house and the country parsonage, with the unadventurous temper and the not too heartrending passions which naturally find a home there. On this sober background each of her figures stands out marvellously distinct, each delicately but decisively shaded off from all the rest. Thus by limiting her range, she secured absolute control over every inch of the ground. By measuring her resources, she achieved complete unity of effect, together with a mastery of her instrument, such as few artists can claim to have approached. In these respects, it is hardly too much to say that, by her, most of our novelists appear little better than bunglers. The limits she set herself may be, they undoubtedly are, comparatively narrow. But within those limits, the genius she shows is unerring, and the art is perfect. Her minute portraiture of still life in country and country-town has supplied an ideal to a host of subsequent novelists. But it is an ideal which Mrs Gaskell alone, in *Cranford* and *Wives and Daughters*, has been able to attain. George Eliot might be cited as a further instance. But there is so much beside this in her novels, that the general effect is altogether different.

Talented as she is, Miss Edgeworth is far from reaching the same level as either of the foregoing, though in variety she certainly surpasses Miss Austen, and perhaps Miss Burney also. There are, in fact, three distinct veins which she worked with unquestioned success: that of edification, in the *Moral* and *Popular Tales;* romance, as in *Ormond;* and the vivid portraiture of Irish life, of which *Ormond* (1817) is one example, and *Castle Rackrent* (1800) and *The Absentee* (1812) are, rather strangely, instances more familiar. The *Moral* and *Popular Tales* are wonderful achievements in a field which was diligently tilled during this period, and where a harvest is singularly hard to reap. In the more ambitious ones, doubtless,—in the Rosamond and Laura of our youth,—the claims of the humdrum virtues are driven home with too little of remorse; and the child-reader begins to hate the very sound of prudence, thrift, and foresight, to think much less of the wise virgin than the foolish. But in the shorter tales—*Simple Susan*, for instance, or *Lazy Lawrence*—the moral agriculture is less obtrusive, and the stories are told with unfailing zest and much dramatic power. In romance—or, more accurately, in the tales of "fashionable" life and sentiment—she is less at home, and her work less distinctive; though, even here, she is by no means to be despised. *Belinda*, for instance (1801), has curious anticipations of some of the most recent developments of the novel. It is, however, by her pictures of Irish life—the light-hearted peasant and the rollicking squireen, whom

Miss Edgeworth.

she had known from childhood—that her fame is kept alive. Here her work is admirable in itself—King Corny, for instance, in *Ormond* is a masterpiece; and it is yet more important, as the first thing of the kind in the history of the novel. Before Miss Edgeworth, no novelist had taken the humours of the soil for the main theme—nor even, if we consider the matter strictly, as a subordinate theme—of his story. The nearest approach to anything of the kind is to be found in the "picaresque" romances, of which *Gil Blas* and *Tom Jones* are the standing examples. But there, adventure is the real object; and, so long as plenty of that be provided, the peasant's hut counts for less than the band of strolling players, or the den of thieves, or the old man of the hill. With Miss Edgeworth, the conditions are exactly reversed. Adventure falls into the background. The whole interest gathers round the peat-bog, the peasant's hovel, the ramshackle castle of the village "king." That she gained a hearing for things so "low," as fifty years earlier Fielding's readers had reckoned them to be, is, no doubt, partly due to her own talent. But it is due still more to a change in the reading public, a change ultimately bound up with the French Revolution and the influence of Rousseau. It is due most of all to the picturesque charm of the particular soil on which it was her fortune to be born. Had she painted the peasants of Devon or Yorkshire, it is more than doubtful whether her portraits would have been hung. However that may be, her "Irishry" prepared the way for the lairds, peasants, gaberlunzies, and gipsies of Scott; just as, at a later time, they gave the hint for the moujiks of Tur-

genjev and Tolstoi. And by two of these the instruction, though by Scott at any rate it was immeasurably bettered, is admitted to have come, in the first instance, from the authoress of *Ormond*.

Didactic novel.

Few words will suffice for the novel of edification, a species which, like the romantic novel, first took distinct shape during this period. The chief difficulty in dealing with it comes from the faintness of the line which separates it from more legitimate forms of the novel, particularly from the novel of sentiment. Thus, by some qualities of his work, Mackenzie might well be reckoned among the prophets of the pulpit. So also might Miss Edgeworth. On the other hand, Mrs Inchbald's right to a place in the catalogue might not unreasonably be disputed. The first of her two novels, *A Simple Story*, manifestly as it is planned to show "the pernicious effects of an improper education," is still of intrinsic interest from the vividness of its characters. It is only by her later venture, *Nature and Art*, that she definitely—and, it must be added, with brilliant effect—crosses the border into the romance of edification. The same doubt arises with Bage. In such cases as Hannah More, however, there is no possibility of question. She is a preacher of pure blood. So is Day, the author of *Sandford and Merton*.

Mrs More.

During her long and active life, Hannah More won fame in many directions. Drama, sacred and profane, social and sentimental poetry, political and religious tracts, had all brought her distinction, — the two former a full

generation before she tried her fortune with the novel. It is, however, her one novel, *Cœlebs in search of a Wife* (1809), which alone survives to the present day. And, from beginning to end, it is avowedly the work of a moralist: a moralist who had been honoured with the affection of Johnson, and carried on his tradition. The characters of the story, it must be confessed, are little more than the mouthpiece of the author's religious and social opinions, or beacons of warning against those who rejected them. But the opinions themselves, which are those of moderate evangelicalism, are sound and healthy; and the book is interspersed with lively as well as sensible satire upon the social and educational follies of the time. In spite of the continual sermons, the story has undeniable interest; and the style, obviously flavoured with reminiscences of Johnson, is as sound as the matter. That the authoress had *Rasselas* more or less present to her mind, is not impossible. But it is *Rasselas* without the romantic setting, and without the plangent note of melancholy which gives it pathos and distinction. The finest work of Mrs More lay in her self-denying labours for the miners and peasantry of Somerset; and her *Memoirs*, embodying excellent letters by herself and her sisters, will long serve to keep her strong and kindly character in remembrance.

Mrs Inchbald.

Mrs Inchbald was one of the most quick-witted as well as one of the most attractive women of her day; and, though writing seems to have been against the grain with her, she left her mark both on the theatre and the novel. She

produced a variety of lively farces and other dramatic pieces, besides a valuable collection of stock plays, *The British Theatre.* And her two novels, *A Simple Story* (1791) and *Nature and Art* (1796), are both works of marked individuality. The character of the heroine in the former is drawn with singular dramatic skill; though, with a view to pointing the moral, the frivolity of a not ill-meaning coquette is handled far too vindictively by the authoress. *Nature and Art* is a still more distinctive tale; and, as has been said, the didactic purpose is still more clearly marked. A lad, who has been bred among savages, is suddenly pitchforked into an intensely respectable circle of deans, bishops, and predestined judges. The thread of the story is spun round the contrast between *his* "nature" and the artificiality of his surroundings. The situations are both conceived and worked out with charming vivacity; and the amount of direct preaching is surprisingly small. It has a further interest from the sources of its inspiration. If Mrs More represents the tradition of Johnson, Mrs Inchbald stands for that of Voltaire and Rousseau. There is a touch of *L'Ingénu* in *Nature and Art*, there is more than a touch of the *Discours sur la Civilisation* and of *Émile.*

A word may be said of a novel which appeared in the same year as *Nature and Art*, and which has some points in common with it; *Hermsprong* or *Man as he is not*, by Bage. It has the misfortune to be one of the worst-told

Bage.

tales in the language. Yet it is full of talent, and represents, better perhaps than any other work of fiction, the ferment of opinion which the French Revolution raised in this country during the last ten years of the eighteenth century. It abounds in effective satire against the established order, both in Church and State. Like *Nature and Art*, it is strongly influenced by Rousseau and, to a less degree, by Voltaire. It anticipates—though it must be confessed, feebly enough — the backwoods and Red Indians of Chateaubriand. And in the style, there is here and there a dash of Sterne. In this strange medley, the most effective figure is that of Miss Fluart, the strong-minded and resourceful counsellor of an intolerably insipid heroine. But the chief significance of the book is to be an early sample of the "novel with a purpose"; and a record of an important, but now nearly forgotten, phase of public opinion, the phase that is also represented by Godwin and by Holcroft.

Development of the Novel.

This completes our account of the novel. It only remains to define the chief changes which the history of these years brought about in its general character and scope. To begin with the point of least importance, it was during this period that the novel was first used for the distinct purpose of preaching social reform. This, no doubt, was a dangerous principle to bring into a work of imagination; and those who imported it had not, any more than the majority of their successors, the genius which alone can turn it to good

account. But it is only just to remember that the novel with a purpose has not always been the clumsy thing it was in the hands of its inventors; and that in rare cases—cases, however, which include many of the novels of Dickens and one at least of the romances of Hugo—it has supplied the framework for some of the greatest triumphs achieved in fiction. Turning to the main stream of development, we find that the various currents, which hitherto had hardly separated themselves, tend more and more to become distinct. Romance breaks away from the tale of contemporary manners; the tale of contemporary manners purges itself more and more from the leaven of sentiment and romance. The latter process is seen in the passage from Richardson to Miss Burney, and from Miss Burney to Miss Austen. It was soon to be carried still further by Galt. The former process, in view of its ultimate consequences, is perhaps still more important. For it was during these years that the way was gradually prepared for the romantic novel, as perfected by Scott. The task of elaborating this form of the novel was more than ordinarily slow. The first elements to take definite shape are those which were drawn from the work of the great novelists of the preceding generation; the element of sentiment, as embodied in the *Man of Feeling;* that of highly wrought passion, in *Julia de Roubigné.* Then, with *Vathek,* comes the romance of the supernatural, which is brought a step nearer to the ordinary conditions of life in *St Leon.* Finally, all these elements meet—meet, but without combining

—in the novels of Mrs Radcliffe; who also attempts —it is true, with the least possible success—to add to them the interest which springs from an appeal to the historic past. Before the end of the century, moreover, Miss Edgeworth, a romanticist without knowing it, had lit upon yet another theme, which was ultimately to find place within the magic circle of the romantic novel—that of a richly-coloured local life, which has come down almost unchanged from remote antiquity. Thus, within these thirty years, all the materials which went to the making of the Waverleys had been gradually accumulated. Only the touch of the "magician" was needed to harmonise them, and make each of them fall into its proper place.

Lighter poetry —Wolcot, Gifford.

In the lighter poetry of the time, which practically reduces itself to political and, in a less degree, to literary satire, the chief names are Wolcot (Peter Pindar), Gifford, the authors of the *Rolliad* and those of the *Anti-Jacobin*. At first the wit was with the Opposition; it was only at the reaction against the French Revolution that it came round to the side of the Ministry. Wolcot (1738-1819), who may be defined as a more versatile and more abusive Churchill, began as assailant of the Royal Academy (1782-85), and then of Boswell and Mrs Thrale. But he soon flew at higher game, the royal household and the king. His most elaborate effort in that kind is the *Lousiad* (1786), a lively but intolerably coarse mock-heroic

on the alleged discovery of a louse in the royal peas. This was followed, during the next twenty years and more, by a succession of bitter squibs against Pitt, his henchmen and his master; together with somewhat two-edged apologies for Paine and other "incendiaries." His eye for a good subject is uncommonly keen; his command of language, and particularly of effective rhyme, almost inexhaustible. But, especially in his earlier writings, the undoubted merits of his satire are weakened, even for the purpose of momentary effect, by his unbridled scurrility. The work done by Gifford (1756-1826) on his own account is small in quantity, and by no means first-rate in quality. The *Baviad* (1794), the *Mœviad* (1795), and an *Epistle to Peter Pindar* (1800) almost exhaust the list. The two former pieces are a violent attack upon the tenth-rate poets of the day, particularly the "Della Cruscans" (Merry, Greathead, Mrs Robinson, Mrs Thrale, and the rest) who flourished during the ten years following 1785. But there is little literary power in the new Dunciad, which has all the defects of the old and none of its amazing merits. The most significant thing in the two diatribes is the admiring tribute to Pope; and by far the most amusing, the copious samples of these languishing rhymesters embalmed in the notes. The *Epistle to Peter Pindar* is without even these attractions; the writer contrives to surpass his very correspondent in scurrility, and one cannot regret that he was paid in kind by *A Cut at a Cobbler*. As editor of the *Quarterly* (1809-1825), Gifford has been commonly credited with the

notorious critique on *Endymion;* certainly, under his editorship, there was too much of that species of writing. His other works are translations of Juvenal and Persius; and editions, where he is seen at his best, of Massinger and Jonson. He was engaged on an edition of Shirley when he died.

Rolliad.

The *Rolliad*—or rather, *Criticisms on the Rolliad* (1784-85)—is a lively collection of satires directed against Pitt at the beginning of his long ministry. The eponymous hero of it is Rolle, a blundering supporter of the Ministry, who in an evil moment had claimed descent from Rollo of Normandy. The "Rolliad" is an imaginary poem, supposed to have been written by this person; and the "criticism" consists of a running commentary on the shadowy original, with copious extracts, maliciously burlesquing Pitt, Dundas, Jenkinson, and other "souls congenial to the souls of Rolles." It was immediately followed by *Political Eclogues*, *Political Miscellanies*, and *Probationary Odes;* the last, a literary burlesque aimed at Wraxall, the Wartons, Ossian Macpherson, and others, in a style which anticipates *Rejected Addresses.* The authorship of these pieces has never been certainly assigned; but among those who contributed were Fitzpatrick, the friend of Fox, Laurence, the friend of Burke, General Burgoyne (of Saratoga), and George Ellis, subsequently the friend of Pitt, Canning, and Scott. The literary merit of all four collections is very considerable; the satire on Pitt is excellent; so is that on Shelburne, Wraxall, and Macpherson.

Still more brilliant is the poetry of the *Anti-Jacobin* (1797-98). Of this famous periodical the chief authors were Canning (1770-1827), Ellis (1753-1815), and Frere (1769-1846); Gifford acted as editor. It began to appear immediately after Pitt's second and last attempt at negotiation with the "regicide Directory"; and from beginning to end it breathes contempt for the Revolution and all its works. The strictly political part is good enough,—*La sainte Guillotine*, for instance, or *The New Morality*, or the *Elegy on the Death of Jean Bon St André*. But the literary satire, the assault on poets infected or supposed to be infected with revolutionary principles, is still better. *The Loves of the Triangles*, *The Progress of Man* (in forty cantos), the *Needy Knifegrinder*, the *Inscription for Mrs Brownrigg's Cell*, *The Rovers*, the hymn sung to the "mystic harps" of the

Anti-Jacobin.

> "five other wandering bards that move
> In sweet accord of harmony and love,
> Coleridge and Southey, Lloyd and Lamb and Co."—

these, in their kind, have never been surpassed; in all probability, they have never been equalled. In later years — Ellis, indeed, even earlier — all three satirists won renown in one field or another: Canning, besides his achievements in statesmanship and oratory, as author of sparkling squibs on Addington and of "The Pilot who weathered the Storm," the finest tribute, if we except Scott's on the same subject, which was ever offered to the genius of a great

statesman; Ellis in the revival of mediæval scholarship; Frere, as translator of Aristophanes and, still more, as author of *The Monks and the Giants* (1817-18), a poem inspired by Pulci, Berni, and, in general, the mock-heroic of the Italians; and destined itself to be the inspiration of *Beppo* and *Don Juan*.

Burke.

Among the thinkers of the time, the figure of Burke (1729-1797) stands unapproached. In his intellectual temper it is easy to distinguish two separate strains: one positive and scientific, the other speculative and even mystical. By these he was inevitably at times drawn in contrary directions; but whatever is best and most characteristic in his writings springs from the interaction of the two. In the earlier part of his career it may be said that the former is predominant; the latter comes more and more to the surface in his closing years. Accordingly his work falls naturally into two unequal periods; the first (1756-1789), in which he was mainly concerned with the political problems of his own country; the second (1790-1797), in which his soul was thrown into denouncing the Revolution in France.

Earlier work.

I. (1756-1789.) Apart from the essay *On the Sublime and Beautiful*, which has been treated in the preceding volume, the writings and speeches of this period form three groups, which divide themselves according to their subject. The first is concerned with matters of home politics: *Observations on a late state of the Nation*, an answer

to a Grenvillite pamphlet of a like title (1769); *Thoughts on the Cause of the present Discontents* (1770); and the speech *On Economical Reform* (1780). To these, from affinity of subject, may be added *Thoughts and Details on Scarcity*, which belongs to 1793. The next group is devoted mainly to colonial policy: the speeches on *American Taxation* (1774) and *Conciliation with America* (1775), and the *Letter to the Sheriffs of Bristol* (1777). Finally, there are the Indian speeches: on *Fox's East India Bill* (1783), *The Nabob of Arcot's Debts* (1785), and the impeachment of Warren Hastings (1788-1795).

Appeal to experience.

In all these we have work which makes an epoch in the history of political discussion. Never before had such industry been brought to the service of these subjects; never had they been treated so exhaustively or with such luminous insight. In the power of mastering the intricacies of a political problem, Burke had no forerunner; with the exception of Gladstone, and possibly of Pitt, he has, in our country at least, had no successor. This was the positive strain in his genius; and it led him to sift every question that came before him down to its minutest detail. Having gained his material in this way, he proceeded to order it in the light of the principles established by past experience; always, that is, with what may be called a conservative bias; always with the object of applying what experience had shown to be expedient in the past, to determine what was likely to prove expedient in the difficulties of the present. And his

practical instinct, at any rate in the wider concerns of government, was so sure that, whenever he fairly set his mind to a question, he may commonly be reckoned to have said the last word upon its merits. There are, of course, exceptions; but, in his earlier years at any rate, this is the rule. Had his advice been taken on the matters at issue between the "patriot king" and his aggrieved subjects, or between the mother country and her American colonies, two of the least agreeable chapters in British history would have remained unwritten.

Expediency.

It is, however, not so much by his practical conclusions as by his methods, and by the principles which lie behind those methods, that he must be judged. And here, as has been said, expediency was his guide: expediency, as indicated in the first instance by the experience of the past; expediency, as further interpreted by the specific circumstances of the present. Each of these two elements is essential to Burke's idea of expediency; and, when he is true to himself, it would be hard to say which of them has the greater weight. The one carries with it the principle of conservation, the "disposition to preserve," the other the principle of adaptation, the readiness "to improve," of which he speaks in a well-known passage of his later writings. Both alike imply an anxious study of the actual conditions of the given problem; both alike demand a patient use of the historical method. It is this that marks him off from the common herd of publicists and statesmen. It is this that establishes a link

between him and the scientific tendencies of his time. Little as he would in some cases have liked the connection, he has this much in common with Priestley or the pioneers of natural evolution on the one hand; with economists like Adam Smith, or historians like Gibbon, on the other. His own field, doubtless, came to be more and more rigidly that of politics. But his central principle admitted, and eventually received, a far wider application,—an application to history, to economics, to natural science, and even to the study of literature. For all of these, each in its own way, it is as true as it is for politics that "circumstances, which with some gentlemen pass for nothing, give in reality to every principle its distinguishing colour and discriminating effect." And it is on an ever-deepening conviction of this truth that the thought and science of the last century are essentially built.

Duty.

In judging Burke's doctrine of expediency, it is necessary to remember how wide a scope — wider, it may be, than is altogether to be justified — he persistently gives to the term. The expediency which the statesman has to consider is, to him, not the convenience of the moment, but that which is demanded for the permanent wellbeing of his nation. It includes not merely the material prosperity or the territorial aggrandisement of his country, but the moral and spiritual responsibilities of its inhabitants. It embraces not merely what a selfish calculation "tells him that he *may* do," but what "humanity, reason, and justice tell him he *ought*

to do." In other words, under the idea of expediency is comprised the idea of duty. Between the two regions, thus somewhat strangely grouped under a common denomination, Burke does not attempt to lay down theoretical demarcations. And it is characteristic of him that he does not. Each case that occurs, he would have said, must be decided on its own merits, and according to its specific circumstances. But no one who is acquainted with the general tenour of his political life will doubt that, to him, the scale was always weighted in favour of the higher principle; that material advantage, and even material wellbeing, were, in his mind, always subordinated to "reason, justice, and humanity."

Later writings.

II. (1790-97.) In the writings which are crowded into the last eight years of his life the interest is rather speculative than practical. This is at once their weakness and their strength. As an examination of the Revolution in its historical causes and results they are of little value. As a criticism of the speculative principles on which he conceived it to be founded they have a significance which it is impossible to overrate. They were published in the following order: *Reflections on the French Revolution* (1790); *A Letter to a Member of the National Assembly*, containing a violent outbreak against Rousseau (1791); *Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs*, which, in a speculative sense, is perhaps deeper even than the *Reflections* (1791); *Thoughts on French Affairs* (1791); *Remarks on the Policy of the Allies* (1793); *A Letter to a Noble*

Lord (1795); and *Letters on a Regicide Peace*, three in number, together with a large fragment of a fourth, originally designed to open the series (1795-97). The last five pieces are the more remarkable, because written under the crushing load of grief which fell upon him with the death of his son and only child, Richard, in the summer of 1794. Yet, broken-hearted as he was, he had never written with a stronger mastery of his argument, with a fuller command of detail, or with a brighter glow of eloquence, than in three at least of these "testamentary utterances."

How far to be reconciled with the earlier.

The later writings of Burke seem at first sight to present a glaring contrast, not to say an irreconcilable contradiction, with those of his earlier years. The Whig of 1770 has become the full-blown Tory of 1790. The Liberal doctrine of the American and Indian speeches is replaced by what may justly be called the authentic gospel of the Conservative reaction. Nor, even on a closer inspection, can the contradiction wholly be denied. Belief in popular government and trust in the popular instinct have given way to distrust, suspicion, and contemptuous hostility. In these matters—and they are manifestly just the matters which constitute the ordinary dividing line between Whig and Tory, Liberal and Conservative—it is impossible to acquit him of grave inconsistency. It is also impossible to acquit him of a reckless departure from the rigorous method, the determination to bolt the facts to the bran, which had made the chief strength of his earlier utterances.

But, when all this has been said, it remains true that, in matters more fundamental yet, he was perfectly consistent; and that any man who had followed his previous course attentively might, when the Revolution broke out, have confidently predicted that he would be found among its bitterest opponents. Revolution, as such, was abhorrent to his cautious temper and his fervid love of order. It was doubly abhorrent when based on a theory of the "rights of men" and the inalienable claim of every man to an equal share in the government of the State. Taking fire at the first whisper of such a creed, he shut his eyes to all the practical gains which the Revolution brought, to the redress of the grinding practical evils of which he can scarcely have been ignorant. He saw nothing but the hated theory; and to destroy the credit of that theory he bent all the force of a genius which, now for the first time, was lifted to the full measure of its strength.

The ground shifted.

Rightly or wrongly, he was convinced that the "professors of the rights of men" based their whole theory of national life upon the individual, upon the conscious reason and the deliberate will of the individual; and that, by consequence, they reduced the State to a piece of mechanism which had been arbitrarily put together, and might at any moment be as arbitrarily destroyed. Against such a theory the old doctrine of expediency was of little avail. He was indeed able, on the strength of it, to point to the dangerous consequences which his opponents' alleged prin-

ciples entailed. He was able to show that anarchy might be expected to follow, and in France had actually followed, upon their acceptance. But the French were justified in retorting that, from the nature of the case, anarchy could not endure for ever, and that anarchy itself was a less evil than the oppression from which they had escaped. Dimly conscious of the weakness of his argument on this side, Burke accordingly set himself to strengthen it on another. In so doing he fell back upon the conservative instinct which had always lain behind both his methods and his specific pleadings; and, under stress of the revolutionary fire, he now raised it to the height and power of a philosophic principle.

Attack on individualism.

The whole argument of the revolutionists, he insisted, rests on a foundation which is rotten, on an assumption which is refuted by the plain facts of the case. To say that the individual is the starting-point is the very reverse of the truth. Trace mankind backwards as far as you please, and you will find it is not the individual who is the unit, but the community. The individual, as conceived by the revolutionists, is a pure abstraction, an imaginary being who never had, and never can have, any substantive existence. It is as member of a community that we know the individual, and as that alone. And, as member of a community, he has become something entirely different from what the imagination may conceive that he might have been as the unsocial, naked

individual. In each community, and by that community, he has been moulded to all that gives him the smallest worth, to all that stamps him with distinctive character or, as we justly say, with individuality. It is the traditions of his particular race, his particular social order, his particular polity and religion, that have made him what he is; it is these that constitute his "permanent reason" and his true self. Without them, men would be "little better than the flies of a summer."

The true end of society.

From all this it may readily be inferred that national life is not the piece of artificial mechanism which it is assumed to be by the revolutionists. It is rather an infinitely complex growth which has formed itself by slow degrees, and each stage of which is conditioned by those that have gone before. Nor is it only that the present is determined by the past. It is also, and no less, true that each part of the whole, at every moment of its growth, is inseparably interwoven with the rest. To suppose that the political organs of the State are, or can be, cut off from the remainder of the national life — the civic from the intellectual, moral, and religious activities of the community—is to suppose an impossibility. Society exists — each nation, in its own measure and after its own capacity, exists—to secure the latter ends as well as the former. It is a partnership not merely in the things which affect the peace and order of its members within, or their strength and dignity without. Much more than this; "it is a

partnership in all science, a partnership in all art, a partnership in every virtue and in all perfection." Destroy the one, and the others are liable, if not certain, to perish with it. Indeed, there is a very true sense in which the deeper and more spiritual energies of man are absolutely dependent upon his political organisation; in which the strongest sanction, and even the specific content, of his moral duties are to be found in his "social, civil relation"; in which, as Cicero said, his affection for his country "embraces all the charities of all the relations that bind him to his fellows." And, if this be the case, "no occasion can justify" a revolution "which would not equally authorise a dispensation with any other moral duty, perhaps with all of them together." To the existence of civil society man owes not merely his political life — not merely the possession of science and the fine arts — but his very conception of moral duty.[1]

Each nation bound by its past.

From these principles two practical consequences, of widely differing import, are drawn by Burke. The first is that, if each nation is what it is in virtue of its past, from that past it cannot altogether escape, however violently it may struggle to do so. Even if men succeed in throwing off the usages, and destroying the institutions, of centuries, they still remain — France herself still remains—in a state of civil society, and the individual is hardly nearer to emancipation than

[1] See *Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs.* Works (London, 1842), i. 521-526.

he was before. A new government is at once set over his head; "power of some kind or other survives the shock in which manners and opinions perish, and will find other, and worse, means for its support." Then the individual, defrauded of his "rights," rebels against the iniquity of the usurper; and brute force is invoked by the latter, as the only weapon remaining against anarchy. "Troops again! Massacre, torture, hanging! These are your rights of men! These are the fruits of metaphysic declarations, wantonly made and shamefully retracted!" Hence the first result of a revolution, which professed to "dissolve the people into its original *moleculæ*," is to set up the irresponsible rule of a "mischievous and ignoble oligarchy." And, seeing that, in the general disruption of moral bonds, "everything depends upon the army," the control will ultimately fall into the hands of "some popular general," and the emancipation of the individual will be found to have led straight to military despotism.

The State controls the passions of the individual.

The other consequence is of yet wider import. It applies not merely to times of revolution, but to the normal course of national existence. If the State embodies the better self, the "permanent reason," of the individual, it follows that no State is worthy of the name in which provision is not made for securing the lasting supremacy of that permanent reason over his "occasional will." The right of the individual to do as he pleases is subject to countless limitations, and to see that those limitations are observed is the

first and main reason for the existence of the State. In insisting upon this, the State is acting in the interest not only of the community, but of the individual himself. For "government is a contrivance of human wisdom to provide for human *wants*. Men have a right that their wants should be provided for by this wisdom. Among these wants is to be reckoned the want, out of civil society, of a sufficient restraint upon their passions. . . . In this sense, the restraints on men, as well as their liberties, are to be reckoned among their rights."

With one omission, to be made good immediately, this will suffice to show the general bearings of Burke's later theory. And it will at once be apparent how completely he had broken away from the individualist theories which had prevailed since Hobbes and Locke, and how nearly he had approached to the conception of the State or nation as an organism, which was to be worked out in detail during the next generation by Fichte, Hegel, and other thinkers on the Continent. Indeed, having gone so far, the wonder is that he did not go farther; that, having recognised the State as an organism,—which he does in effect, though not in so many words,—he did not further recognise that the first essential of such an organism is growth; or, to drop even the semblance of metaphor, that the life of the community or nation is from first to last determined by progress. This he may, and occasionally does, admit in words; but it is manifest that the whole tenour of his argument goes to belittle,

Burke's place in the history of political theory.

or deny, it. Here, it must be confessed, his conservative bias did him a notable disservice; it prevented him from following his own principles, so powerfully conceived and so splendidly set forth, to their logical conclusion. The same thing may be said of that hostility to the individual, which the preceding paragraph will have made apparent. In maintaining that the State is paramount—as Aristotle had said, prior—to the individual, he was assuredly in the right. But it by no means follows from this that the State is despotic master of the individual; still less that the "mass and body of individuals"—the "swinish multitude," as he calls them in one unlucky passage—should be excluded from a dominant voice in the government of the nation. His conclusions on this matter are, indeed, in the closest connection with his deep-rooted suspicion of progress. It is, as Mazzini was to point out, from the individual that progress commonly begins; it is by the reason of the individual—often, at first, in a minority of one—that the faults of the existing system are generally discerned and the means of correcting them discovered. This will account, on the one hand, for the strong hold which individualist theories have exercised, and still exercise, upon the party of progress; and, on the other hand, for the equally strong aversion felt by Burke from such theories and from all that stands even in remote connection with them.

It would be unpardonable to take leave of Burke without pointing to what is, in some ways, his most original contribution to political theory. This is the

"philosophic analogy" which he never wearies of tracing between the life of the nation and the general symmetry and "order of the world." As the individual finds his true place in the nation, so the nation itself lives only in the larger life of civilised humanity; so that, in its turn, is bound up with the whole system of nature, within man and without, and reflects point by point the working of the eternal law which comes from God and, under the widest diversity of forms, repeats itself through the whole known order of the universe. It is this, with the whole train of thought and feeling which flows from this, that gives to Burke's pleadings their deep note of religion, and to the man himself the solemnity and the rapt utterance of a prophet. It is this that led him to his famous defence of an established Church, as "an oblation of the State itself as a worthy offering on the high altar of universal praise"; and, however much we may differ from the particular form of this conception, it is impossible not to be in sympathy with the feeling that prompted it. It is this that led him to denounce all forms of political life or theory which are not based on the nature of man, original or acquired, and on analogy with the slow and silent laws which regulate the being of the natural world around us. If "the idea of a people," and of the corporate life which that carries with it, is to him "wholly artificial," that is because "art is man's nature." And, if reason be the guide of the statesman, it is not the abstract reason of the revolutionists, but the reason which is only another

Analogy between political life and the order of the world.

name for nature; "never, no never, did nature say one thing, and wisdom say another."[1]

Change in the whole conception of reason.

Of all this there is, doubtless, a faint anticipation in Hooker; of the latter part there is a shadowy reflection in later writers, such as Comte and Spencer. But by no writer has it been grasped so clearly, or stated with such a glow of eloquence, as by Burke. And the effects of such a conception reach far beyond the limits of merely political speculation. To say that reason finds expression in the whole of man's nature, instead of in the merely conscious and argumentative fragment of it which alone had been recognised by the general tendencies of eighteenth-century thought, implies a radical change, a change amounting to nothing less than a revolution, in the whole conception of man, and even of the world around him. To Burke, reason is no longer the purely passive and analytic faculty of Locke and his disciples; it is a creative faculty, which draws upon the darker and more mysterious, no less than upon the more definite and conscious, elements of man's experience. In this respect, but in complete independence, he was moving in the same direction as Kant and, still more, as those disciples of Kant, Coleridge included, who during the first quarter of the next century changed the whole face of speculative philosophy.

To claim consistency for Burke, even with the reservations indicated above, would be as idle as it is

[1] Works, ii. 324 (*Regicide Peace*, iii.). Compare i. 411, 413, 414 (*Reflections*).

for other thinkers of his mark. And in his case there are special reasons to the contrary. A consummate master of controversy, he was apt to catch up the first weapon that came to hand, without too nice a regard for the armoury from which it came. Thus, in defiance of his principles, he never shook himself entirely free from the theory of contract. And, when it suited his purpose, he was even ready to take up with a peculiarly obnoxious form of individual rights.[1] All this, however, was in the nature of the case, and it detracts little, if at all, from his greatness as a thinker.

His style.

Founder of a new line in thought, Burke was no less so in style. Contrast him with Swift, and even with Goldsmith, and we see at once how widely different were his methods and aims. "Proper words in proper places" is at once the ideal of Swift and the best definition of his style. No style is more sinewy, none more free from superfluous flesh, more completely stripped to the bone and muscle, than his. For purely intellectual purposes and for expression of the scorn which of all passions stands at closest quarters with the intellectual temper, no style could be more absolutely adapted. And, apart from the ring of passion, this was the dominant note of the prose style of the century as a whole. Few writers, indeed, had the same courage of their convictions as the author of *Gulliver;* most of them strove to hide the bareness of their weapon beneath the somewhat

[1] See Works, i. 403 (*Reflections*).

faded graces of Ciceronian art. But, in spite of these adornments, style was to them a weapon of the intellect, and gave little reflection either to the deeper passions or to imagination. With Burke all this is changed. His essentially imaginative thought naturally found expression in a vivid and imaginative style. His passionate convictions, his appeal to the deeper springs of man's nature, to "humanity and justice," demanded a richness of colouring and a wealth of imagery which would have sorted ill with the critical temper and the unimpassioned common-sense of the "age of reason." It is with the writers of the Commonwealth, and of the age preceding the Commonwealth, that he is to be compared. And though there is no evidence that he was acquainted with them, it is in the prose writings of Milton that the nearest analogy to the style of the *Reflections* and the *Letter to a Noble Lord* is to be found. The style of Milton, no doubt, is even more gorgeous, and it is free from the extravagance of which Burke was sometimes guilty. But in the style of Burke there is something of the same richness, the same easy command of all the resources of the language, from the most majestic rhetoric to the homeliest idiom of the soil, that proclaimed Milton's mastery over the "cool element of prose"; while he unquestionably has the advantage of Milton in flexibility, and the structure of his sentences is far less artificial. In respect of style, no less than in the general tenour of his thought, the breach of Burke with the prevailing tendencies of his century was complete. And, with infinite dif-

ference of detail and cast of sentence, the nineteenth century on the whole followed in his track. But where has he been equalled in the deep and sudden poetry of his phrases; in his power of presenting a train of reasoning under a succession of lights, each of which, while seeming to repeat, in reality adds fresh force to that which has gone before; in his genius for embodying argument in imagery, for fusing imagery through and through with argument?

Answers to Burke.

Round the *Reflections* of Burke may be grouped most of the political literature which we are called upon to notice. Two of the best of such writings—Mackintosh's *Vindiciæ Gallicæ* (1791) and Paine's *Rights of Man* (1791-92)—were composed as direct answers to Burke's attack. The rest stood in more or less close connection with the controversies it excited.

Mackintosh.

Few men would now dream of turning to Mackintosh (1765-1832) either for a judgment on the acts of the Revolution or for guidance on the deeper issues of political speculation. And yet it would be easy to do worse. His answer to Burke's attack on the "wild waste of public evils" committed by the revolutionists, his exposure of what Burke had glorified as the "mild and lawful" rule of Louis XVI., are sound as far as they go. So is his refutation of Burke's truculent, and not too consistent, assault on "natural rights." The latter, however, is the one point in which he comes to close

quarters with his opponent, and he passes from it so quickly that it is hard to believe he realised its importance. In general, it may be said that he deals too much in matters of detail, and writes too much in the manner of an advocate; and he has no eye for the more imaginative, which is also the more convincing, side of Burke's argument. But there are effective thrusts at the bigotry of the *Reflections*. Such is the parallel between Burke's indictment of Dr Price and the charge of Judge Jeffreys at the trial of Algernon Sidney. Such again are the closing words in which he sweeps together the assailants of the Revolution in one comprehensive sarcasm: "The Briefs of the Pope and the pamphlets of Mr Burke, the edicts of the Spanish Court and the mandates of the Spanish Inquisition, the Birmingham rioters and the Oxford graduates, equally render to liberty the involuntary homage of their alarm." It is to be hoped that Burke liked the company in which he found himself.

Paine.

Far more pointed was the answer of Paine (1737-1804). To the more speculative strain in Burke's genius he was constitutionally blind. But he was right in thinking that for the moment the issue was one not of theory but of practice. He saw that the effect of Burke's pamphlet, if not its intention, was to goad England into war with her neighbour. He saw also that the principles laid down in it might be used—and were, in fact, used by Burke himself—to justify the worst abuses and the most cruel injustice. Regarding the whole

plea as a tissue of sophistry, he blazed out into a fire of indignant protest. As a matter of political philosophy, his argument is little more than a re-assertion in rather a crude and vulgar form of the theory of Rights; yet even on this side he deals some shrewd blows at Burke's elaborate edifice. As to the historical facts, he has the advantage of his antagonist; and that hardly less in relation to the practical grievances of the English than to the actual course of revolutionary events in France. Perhaps the most telling of his arguments, certainly one that cuts into the very heart of his opponent's verdict on the Revolution, is that in which he contrasts Burke's indifference to the misery of the poor under the old order with his lamentations over the sufferings of the great under the new: "He pities the plumage, he forgets the dying bird." It would be hard to pack a weightier criticism into fewer words. The remaining works of Paine, numerous as they are, call for no more than a passing comment. The two which made most stir are *Common Sense* (1776) and *The Age of Reason* (1795). Both show the same qualities which appear in the *Rights of Man*—a keen, if somewhat narrow, intellect, and an ardent love of liberty. The former is a masterly plea for American independence and American federation: "Always remember that our strength is continental, not provincial." It contains, moreover, a trenchant statement of the author's attitude towards Government: "Society is produced by our wants, and government by our wickedness. . . . Society is in every state a blessing, but government,

even in its best state, is but a necessary evil; in its worst state, an intolerable one." The latter, which was mainly composed while Paine lay in prison under the revolutionary tyranny, is an elaborate argument against revealed religion and in favour of theism; it carries on the tradition of the earlier deists, at whose loss of vogue Burke had somewhat prematurely exulted. But Paine himself would have admitted that his real strength lay in politics; and here, with all his limitations, he deserves our gratitude for the boldness with which, throughout life, he struggled against oppression; prosecuted by the British government for a revolutionary, and, within a year, imprisoned by the revolutionary government for the courageous stand he had made against the execution of the king.

Godwin.

Among the other books which owe their birth to the Revolution, and in some measure, perhaps, to Burke's indictment of the Revolution, the most remarkable is Godwin's *Political Justice* (1793).[1] The fame of this has now waxed very dim. But at the time it had an astonishing influence upon some of the best intellects of the day, on none more than Wordsworth and, at a later period, Shelley. This was due to the apparently close texture of the argument and to the indisputably wide range which it covers. Who but Godwin would have thought of buttressing a political theory by a laboured proof of the bondage of the will? Yet it is by no means certain that he judged amiss;

[1] A second edition, with large alterations, was published in 1796.

and, in the case of Wordsworth at any rate, it was the metaphysical, rather than the political, argument that struck home. Why Wordsworth or any other man should have bowed the knee to Godwin, even for the moment, it needs now some imagination to discover. The style of the book is colourless, its temper pedantic, and its arguments hopelessly confused. Its author makes a parade of rejecting the term "right." But he does so chiefly because he had not taken the trouble to discover the meaning which it bore to those who used it. The revolutionists, following a wellnigh unbroken tradition of philosophy, employed the term in a strictly political sense. Godwin interprets it in a purely moral sense, and rides off on the plea that, morally speaking, no man has a right to do as he pleases, and consequently that "right" is no better than a high-sounding synonym for wrong. The "justice," however, which he sets up in the place of "right," proves on examination to be little more than right under another name. It is no less abstract a conception; it is as completely bound up with the individualist theory of the State; it debars, and was intended by Godwin to debar, the State from limiting the freedom of the individual no less than the theory of Rights, which it affected to dethrone. Still more fatal than such inconsistencies is the assumption, which runs from beginning to end of the treatise, that the existing system of society—"this vain world, that kings and priests are plotting in"—is the work of brute force and deception; but that Reason, the highly attenuated reason of eighteenth-century philosophy,

will one day dawn, and ultimately the whole world become a convert to Political Justice. No heroic efforts, Godwin is convinced, are needed to secure this desirable end. So inevitable is it that, if only the truth be pertinaciously preached, it will come about of itself. It is small wonder that, when the ministry of the day debated whether there were any need to prosecute the author, Pitt should have argued that he might safely be let alone. Godwin, in truth, was not of the stuff of which revolutionists are made, and, when the Whigs at last came into power, he subsided into a small Government office. But neither this nor the drab meagreness of his political ideal should blind us to the honourable part he played at the height of the anti-Jacobin panic. In his letter to Chief-Justice Eyre (1794), as well as in his more elaborate treatise, he boldly upheld the standard of freedom, and did perhaps more than any other man, Erskine excepted, to win the British Jury against a system of terrorism of which Pitt himself had the magnanimity to be more than half ashamed. And it is as a protest against the evils of his own day—some, though none too many, of which have been since reformed—that we must accept his doctrine of Punishment, of Gratitude, of Education, of "man Equal, unclassed, tribeless and nationless," which, strangely enough, inspired one of the most poetic visions of Shelley. Godwin is further memorable as the first, or nearly the first, of the long line of literary anarchists. Communism, free love, the abolition of taxation, may reckon him among their prophets. The State, property, marriage

—death itself—went down beneath his blows; or would have done so, had words the force of deeds.

Political Justice was only an episode in the long life of Godwin. His other labours range from a *History of Chatham* to *Faulkner, a Tragedy;* and from a *Life of Chaucer* to *Caleb Williams* and *St Leon.* Of these, the two last only survive. They have been noticed in connection with the history of the novel.

Bentham.

It remains to speak of a man whose influence over the next two generations surpassed that of any other thinker, and who, through the writings of his disciples, still speaks to the men of our own day—Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832). From the long list of his works, which fill eleven closely printed volumes, two only need be taken by name —the *Fragment on Government* (1776) and *Principles of Morals and Legislation* (privately printed 1780, published 1789). The former, avowedly a criticism on a well-known passage of Blackstone's *Commentaries,* is incidentally a statement of Bentham's views on political philosophy. The latter, a far more elaborate work, expounds the utilitarian doctrine in its two main applications, to individual conduct and to legislative action. In these two works the germs of nearly all that he taught are implicitly contained.

As moral philosopher.

The "utilitarian" theory, the "greatest happiness principle," was first and foremost a moral doctrine, suggested by the problems of man's moral life, and intended as a key to unlock their difficulties. It is right, therefore, to begin with the *Principles of Morals.* Bentham was profoundly con-

vinced that such terms as "conscience" and "moral sense"—nay, if they are to be pressed to their strictest connotation, even "right" and "duty"—merely confuse the issue, and that all action is to be tested by expediency, all moral judgment to be reduced to a calculation of pleasure. An action is right if it tends to produce pleasure; wrong, if it tends to produce an overplus of pain. Two things, however, must be carefully borne in mind. Firstly, the pleasure in question is not, and must not be, confined to the pleasure carried by the single act; it is essentially the pleasure of a lifetime. That action is not necessarily the best, of which the pleasure at the moment is the most intense. For experience shows that the most intense pleasures are apt to be not only the shortest, but also the most likely to bring pain as an after consequence; whereas the pleasures which, for the moment, are milder are, on the whole, found to be those which are most likely to reproduce themselves, to be fruitful of like pleasures in the future. Secondly, the pleasure sought must be not only the pleasure of the individual agent, but that of the greatest possible number of his fellow-men.

In one respect, it is impossible to overrate the service which Bentham rendered to ethical inquiry. Utility may not be, and is not, a principle sufficient to account for all the acts which enter into our estimate of a man's moral worth. Still less is it a principle sufficient to account for the fact that he acts under a sense of obligation. But, the sense of obligation or

duty once given, it is by its utility, and by that alone, that the character of each act, as apart from the character of the agent, is to be judged. And Bentham was right in holding that the neglect of this truth is to answer for most, if not all, of the conscientious errors which have caused so much waste, and often so much misery, to mankind. Nor must we forget that, if during the last century this has come to be more and more fully acknowledged, that is mainly due to the influence of Bentham.

Yet in spite of this signal merit—a merit which no wise man will disregard—the gaps in Bentham's system are sufficiently glaring; far more glaring than in that of his master, Hume. His attempt to dispose of the idea of duty must be held to have entirely broken down. Even if self-regarding actions could be explained without it—which in many cases they can not—an act of self-sacrifice, still more of martyrdom, for the sake of others would remain an impenetrable mystery; or rather, it would be utterly without justification. With all his apparatus of "sanctions"—physical, social, political, and the rest—Bentham does not for one moment succeed in bridging the gulf between the interest of society and the operative pleasure of the individual; not to mention the fact that, in the case of martyrdom, all the sanctions, with the single exception of the religious,—which, on Bentham's own showing, has no business to be there at all,—operate with one accord in the wrong direction. Again, if the morality of an act really depends on the correctness with which its consequences in the way

of pleasure are calculated, what justice would there be in punishment? To punish a man for no better reason than that he has acted under a misapprehension would be one of the maddest courses it is possible to conceive. Yet no moralist is more rigid to insist on the necessity of punishment than the man who devised the "felicific calculus."

As legislative reformer.

When we pass to the legislative side of Bentham's doctrine, we are at once conscious of standing on firmer ground. Here his speculative weakness—or what, by comparison, must pass for such—counts for little. He stands out in his full strength as practical reformer—a reformer of legal theory; and, what is still more important, a reformer of the abuses which had disgraced English law with a most barbarous practice. Here he follows Beccaria, and moves with the general current of his time. But it is not too much to say that, of all the men who took part in the reform of our criminal law, Bentham laboured the hardest and left the deepest mark behind him. Nor would it be fair to forget that this was a direct result of his utilitarian convictions.

As political philosopher.

His merits as political philosopher are more equivocal. Powerful to destroy, his weakness appears the moment he attempts to build. His criticism of Blackstone, though not entirely fair, is sound in essentials and brilliant in execution. Equally sound, equally brilliant, but without the unfairness, is his assault on the theory of contract. But, when it comes to construction, he has nothing better to offer than the principle of

"utility"; "the principle which alone depends not upon any higher reason, but which is itself the sole and all-sufficient reason for every point of practice whatsoever." At first sight we might be tempted to suppose that we have here, under another name, the expediency of Burke. And no one will deny the affinity between the theory of Bentham or that of Hume, from whom he derived it, on the one hand, and that of Burke on the other. But, in fact, there is all the difference in the world between expediency, pure and simple, as it is in Hume or Bentham, and expediency qualified by wider and higher principles — by instinct, by tradition, by a tissue of moral and religious ideals — as it is in Burke. For the practical needs of the moment, it is probable that Bentham's "philosophic radicalism" —in itself a somewhat thin and bald conception— was a safer guide than the deeper and richer theory of Burke. But, as a principle to account for the political life of man, in its historical origin and its historical development, it will not stand the comparison for an instant.

Intensely keen on one side, that of practical reform, the mind of Bentham must be admitted to have lacked breadth; and he was incapable of seeing beyond the four corners of his own theories. Moreover, there was a curious strain of pedantry in his nature—a pedantry which comes out not only in his thought, but in his later style. So long as he gave himself a chance, his style, though a trifle diffuse, was remarkable for its vivacity. And there is no better example of it than

the *Fragment on Government*. But in later years he deliberately adopted a pseudo-mathematical jargon, to which the technical language of German philosophy is grace itself. Yet the practical services he rendered to his own country and mankind are so great, the stimulus he gave to thought in his own day was so healthy, that it is ungracious to dwell on his weaknesses and limitations.

Coleridge as philosopher.

Mill, in a well-known essay, speaks of Bentham as one of "the two seminal minds" of the last century, and of Coleridge as the other. And if we take the words, as they were clearly meant, to refer to speculative tendencies, he was probably in the right in both cases. But, whereas Bentham left a large mass of published writing behind him, the written prose of Coleridge might easily be held in three very moderate volumes. What is more, not one of them, with the exception of *Biographia Literaria*, can claim to be of permanent value. The individual thoughts are too vague, the connection too loose, to leave any definite or lasting impression on the mind of the reader. It was, in fact, not by his books but by his talk that Coleridge stamped himself upon his age. In talk his indolence found a stimulus, which the pen was powerless to give. And in talk, though here he was sometimes precise enough, even vagueness itself, thanks to his marvellous eloquence, conveyed a more or less definite meaning. And, after all, what he had to say was far more impressive in its general scope than when he pursued it into minute detail. His real task

was to deliver his testimony against the materialist creed of his day, to lay stress upon the abiding element of mystery in man and nature. And, lacking as he did the industry—perhaps the power of consecutive thought — which enabled Kant, for instance, to argue the case in detail, nothing was left him but to reiterate his cardinal doctrine in all the forms that a boundless imagination placed within his reach — a work which no book could have accomplished with half the results that flowed from his spoken eloquence. The scattered fragments of his conversation — but they are no more than crumbs from the rich man's table—are to be found in his *Table Talk.* A brilliant description of it, but with more than an edge of sarcasm, forms the most striking chapter in Carlyle's *Life of Sterling.* There is another, equally brilliant and scarcely less touched with mockery, in the Letters of Keats. Best of all, if only because it is more appreciative, is the picture of him, as he was in his glorious dawn, by Hazlitt. One thing only needs to be added. The most definite outcome of this abounding flow of talk is to be seen in the religious, rather than in the speculative, thought of his time. And it told in two different, if not opposite, directions. Coleridge was, in fact, the father of the broad-church movement; and he was godfather of the high-church. On the one hand, he was the master of such men as Maurice; on the other hand, he did yeoman's service in preparing the ground for that conception of the Church which was afterwards elaborated by Newman. "The two strongest

proofs of Christianity," he once said, "are Christianity and Christendom." And, as time went on, he came more and more to identify the latter with the Church.

As literary critic.

In the history of literary criticism Coleridge holds a place apart. On his writings and lectures all that is most valuable in English criticism, during at least the first half of last century, may be said to rest. His critical work is contained in *Biographia Literaria* (1817); to a small extent in the *Friend* and *Table Talk;* to a much larger in the fragmentary records of his lectures. The latter were delivered at intervals from 1808[1] to 1819. They deal, for the most part, either with first principles or with the poetry and drama of England, particularly in the Elizabethan and Stuart age. He combines, in a degree unusual even with great critics, the two powers which are most essential to distinction in this field — a poet's sense of beauty, and what falls short of beauty, in the conception and execution of any literary work that comes before him, and a philosopher's genius for analysis, for tracking poetic effects to their hidden causes, for estimating the success with which, in a given imaginative product, means have been proportioned to ends. To these he adds a quality which is distinct from either of them, though closely connected with the latter—a keen eye for the speculative issues involved

[1] A previous course (1802), or courses, would seem to have been the creation of Coleridge's imagination, intended to parry the charge of plagiarism from Schlegel. Nor was even the course of 1806, though undoubtedly planned, ever delivered.

in imaginative creation; a faculty which, quite apart from that of criticism in the stricter sense, enabled him, with all his indolence, to leave at least the scattered fragments of what in Germany would be called an "æsthetic." It is in handling the Elizabethan Drama and the poetry of Wordsworth that he is seen at his best. The Elizabethan Drama to him means, it may fairly be objected, little beyond Shakespeare; the other playwrights — Jonson, Massinger, Beaumont and Fletcher — are introduced chiefly, though by no means solely, as foils to Shakespeare; and two at least of the greatest—Ford and Webster—seem to have been neglected altogether. But though there is some force in this criticism, what he contributed to a sound judgment of Shakespeare, and the requirements of the Drama in general, is so solid and so brilliant that his position is left practically unshaken. So also with his pronouncement on Wordsworth. Considering that Wordsworth's poetry was but just beginning to win its way against prejudice and obloquy, the verdict of Coleridge may be held to have more of the candid friend than is altogether pleasant. And Wordsworth himself seems to have been wounded. This, however, is a matter which affects the personal delicacy of the critic, not the justice of his criticism. And, bating a slight tendency to find unnecessary fault, that criticism, both in its wider and its narrower aspects, remains one of the most penetrating in the language.

From Coleridge, as critic, it is natural to pass to his lifelong friend and clear-sighted admirer, Lamb

(1775-1834). Of the speculative strain, which was so strong in Coleridge, there is no trace in Lamb; it is probable that he would not have accepted it even at a gift. His range, too, is more limited, and, even within that range, he takes and leaves with a touch of waywardness. But where his admiration is roused, his sense of poetic beauty is even subtler than Coleridge's; and his vivid humour, his intense humanity, impelled him always to seize that which binds literature to the common lot of mankind: to seek in poetry the reflection of the very passions and cravings which stirred the artist's own soul, and which find an echo—though it may be a softened and a broken echo—in the heart of others less gifted than himself. To Coleridge literature may be said to end in itself; and, for many purposes, it may well be treated as doing so. Lamb, without ever sinking into the moralist, has the still rarer faculty of reaching behind the purely literary quality of a book to the vital pulsations, of which it is the imaginative register. Hence, on the one hand, his quick sense of all that is heroic and chivalrous in the Elizabethan dramatists, and, on the other hand, the instinct which impels him, wherever possible, to illustrate his reading of a drama from the conception, the tones, the gestures of actors whom he had seen on the stage. He may not always succeed in catching the mood which the dramatist himself most probably had in view; his love of paradox was sometimes an obstacle in his way, but it is always this that he endeavours to seize. Thus, brief as they are, the

Lamb.

criticisms which he attaches to his chief work in this field, *Selections from the Elizabethan Dramatists* (1808), are gems never surpassed. Apart from the appreciative intensity of his critical work, his main service perhaps is to have broken down the limits which had commonly been imposed on the study of our Drama. Previous critics, Coleridge himself not excepted, had, except for parallel passages, looked little beyond Shakespeare. Lamb was the first to treat the Elizabethan Drama, the age from 1580 to 1640, as a whole. It can only be regretted that, as critic, he wrote comparatively little. Besides the *Selections*, there are scattered pieces of criticism in the *Essays of Elia* (from 1820 onwards), and in his incomparable letters. But that is all.

Edinburgh *and* Quarterly.

The only other critical work it is necessary to mention is that of the *Edinburgh* and *Quarterly*,—the former founded in 1802, the latter, as a political counterblast, in 1809. The editor of the *Edinburgh* was Sydney Smith, and then Jeffrey, with Brougham and, at first, Scott as chief contributors. Gifford, as has been said, was editor of the *Quarterly*, his most distinguished contributors being Scott, Southey, and Ellis. It can hardly be said that these reviews added much either to the finer or the more solid endowments of criticism. But they spoke with more authority than the old *Criticals* and *Monthlies;* in spite of their flippancy and savagery, they were not seldom just in their verdicts; and they were, on the whole, well written.

We pass to a very different field, that of oratory. This period, by universal admission, was the heroic age of parliamentary eloquence. Chatham, Burke, Fox, Grattan, Sheridan, and the younger Pitt were all in full activity; and they are only the captains of an army containing several men with attainments little lower than their own. Of the leaders, Chatham (1708-1778) was in all probability the greatest—greatest as statesman, greatest also as orator. In spite of what has sometimes been alleged, he was, of all orators, the most natural and the most spontaneous. Taking generally, as has been well said, the tone of "inspired conversation," he rises to sudden outbursts of unbidden passion, which sweep away all opposition as chaff before the wind. Such was the appeal of his last speech in the Commons (1766)—"Sir, I rejoice that America has resisted." Such was his fiery denunciation of the employment of Red Indians, "hell-hounds," against the colonists, in the last year of his life (1777). Yet, with all his passion, few speakers could weave an argument more closely; witness his various expositions of foreign policy, a subject of which he was supreme master; witness, in a very different vein, his attack on Lord Mansfield for his conduct at the famous trial of Woodfall (1770).

Orators: Chatham.

To the reader the speeches of Burke will always remain masterpieces unapproached. And it is a mistake to suppose that, even as spoken, they were ineffective. His great efforts, like that on Conciliation with America, may be some-

Burke.

what too literary in style and have too much of the essay in their method. But this is not the case with the speeches which he threw off night after night on the spur of the moment. These, as all the evidence goes to prove, were—at any rate in his earlier years — admirably suited for their purpose; and the readiness, to which they witness, made him for many years virtual leader of the Opposition. Yet, after all, it is on the more elaborate orations that his fame really rests; on the wisdom, the grasp both of detail and principle, on the beauty of style and the high imagination, in all of which they stand unrivalled.

Fox.

Fox (1749-1806) is in many points the very antithesis of Burke. In the higher flights of oratory he is comparatively weak. He is, above all a great debater; a debater, however, who carries the sustained passion of the orator into the cut and thrust of argumentative fence: "reason and passion fused together," according to the verdict of Macaulay. The finest example of his powers is perhaps the speech on the Russian Armament (1792). Here he had his great adversary clearly at a disadvantage, and he drives his blows home with merciless insistence. It is significant — and the circumstances attending this speech are a striking instance of the fact—that he was the only opponent whom Pitt commonly thought it worth his while seriously to answer.

With Sheridan and Grattan we return to the Irish tradition, partly represented by Burke. And,

if Fox was the most unadorned of orators, Sheridan was the most ornate. His style, partly for that reason, did not lend itself to the imperfect reporting of that day, and little more than the wreck of his eloquence has come down to us. But on the rare occasions when he shook off his indolence he seems to have fairly eclipsed all his rivals, who unanimously pronounced the first of his "Begum speeches" (1787) to be, as Burke put it, "the most astonishing effort of eloquence, argument, and wit united, of which there is any record or tradition." And his powers both of passionate appeal and of raillery remained even in the gloom of his closing years. Of Grattan's eloquence (1746-1820), which was hardly less ornate, the records are less imperfect. His greatest effort was probably his impassioned plea against the Union, which was the swan-song of the Irish Parliament (1800). And few things in the whole range of eloquence are finer than the passage in which, with a lover's devotion, he asserted the indestructible life of Irish nationality,—

Sheridan, Grattan.

> "Thou art not conquered; beauty's ensign yet
> Is crimson in thy lips and in thy cheeks,
> And death's pale flag is not advanced there."

In the English Parliament he was always something of an alien, though Pitt, who was immensely tickled by the extravagance of his gestures, magnanimously went out of his way to gain him a respectful hearing.

Very different was the oratory of Pitt (1759-1806). In genius for exposition, he is comparable to Glad-

stone; in stateliness, it is probable that he stands alone among the orators of our nation. At times, too, he gave play to qualities not ordinarily associated with these. His power of retort was terrible, his sarcasm scathing; and he was capable of an imaginative splendour which few orators, if any, have surpassed. The crucial instance of the last quality is to be found in his speech on the Slave Trade (1792), the last half-hour of which, as Wilberforce proudly testifies, was "one unbroken torrent of majestic eloquence," and it certainly closes with one of the finest images in the records of eloquence. With him, as with his father, what seems to have struck the hearers most was the nobility of character, the inflexible resolution, which lay behind his great powers of speech and gave double weight to every word. And there is one speech—the last words he ever uttered in public—which, even at the distance of a century, gives some impression of what was habitually felt by those who heard him. At the Mayor's banquet, a few days after Trafalgar, the health of the great Minister was proposed as "the saviour of Europe." "He was not up for more than two minutes," said Wellington, who was present, "but his reply was perfect: 'Let us hope that England, having saved *herself* by her energy, may save Europe by her example.'"

Pitt.

Before passing to the next chapter, it may be well to go beyond the bounds of our own country and to glance at some of those achievements, on

which it is impossible to dwell at length, but which, throughout western Europe, did much to form the intellectual background of the age. These may be roughly divided into the advance of Learning and that of Natural Science.

Intellectual advance in Europe.

As for Learning, this period saw the creation of the History of Literature. It saw also the application—in germ—of entirely new methods in History and Theology. In the study of Literature three tendencies, closely connected with each other, may be distinguished. There was a closer study of detail—in particular, a keener eye for the sources and antiquities of the various national literatures—than had ever been known before. There was an equally strong desire to grasp the history and bearings of each literature as a whole. Finally, there was an endeavour to apply to literature—in particular, of course, to its older monuments—the critical principles which minute learning, interpreted by the wider outlook of the time, had laid ready to hand. The first of these tendencies is, in this country, best represented by Tyrwhitt, whose edition of the *Canterbury Tales* (1775) is a monument of scholarly acuteness, and displays a knowledge of mediæval literature—French, Provençal, and Italian—such as no previous, and few subsequent, writers have attained. The *editio princeps* of *Beowulf*, by Thorkelin, though it was not published till 1815, in reality dates from this period. For the unique manuscript was copied by him in 1786, and the book itself was ready for publication, when the

Study of older Literature.

greater part of it was destroyed in the bombardment of Copenhagen (1807). This must be regarded as the most important event in the history of old English scholarship since the appearance of Hickes' *Thesaurus* (1703-5). It is hardly creditable to our nation that such a service should have been rendered by a foreigner. In France, we may recall the enormous labours of Sainte-Palaye (1697-1781), the last volume of whose *Mémoires sur l'ancienne Chevalerie* appeared in the year before his death,[1] and who left behind him a monumental Dictionary of Old and Mediæval French, the first volume of which appeared in 1789, but which has not been completely published till our own day. In Germany, the land of learning, we must content ourselves with two points. The first is the life-work of Heyne (1729-1812), whose *Virgil* appeared in successive editions from 1767 to 1803; *Pindar*, in the same fashion, from 1774 to 1798 (the last edition including the Fragments, Scholia, and Hermann's Essay on the Metres); and the *Iliad* in 1802. The chief importance of all three, together with his numerous Essays, is, in the first place, their deep learning; and, in the second, that Heyne was among the earliest, if not the earliest, of modern scholars to treat the classics as literature, and, what is hardly less significant, as an embodiment of the traditions, myths, beliefs of the ancient world. In this respect he is the worthy forerunner of his pupil, Wolf, and presents a notable contrast with his younger contemporary, Porson. The other point to be mentioned is the

[1] The two previous ones in 1759.

editio princeps of the *Nibelungenlied*, by C. H. Myller, in 1782;[1] the first sign of that renewed interest in the heroic literature of the nation which worked with so profound an effect upon the generation following that of Herder and Goethe. It may be added that the *editio princeps* of the *Edda* began to appear at Copenhagen in 1787; it was not completed till 1828.

History of Literature.

Of the beginnings of the History of Literature, in the strictest sense,—of that study which treats literature as the expression of the life of a given nation, as determined by that life, and, like it, as subject to an intelligible law of progress,—it is unnecessary to say much. It will fall to be spoken of in connection with Friedrich Schlegel. The one work to be mentioned here is Warton's *History of English Poetry* (1774-78), which may fairly claim to be the earliest History of a national literature to be attempted in any country. The arrangement, no doubt, is bad; the sense of proportion, weak; the connection between one period and another is most imperfectly explained. But the learning is wide, as well as deep; and on not a few points the book remains an authority to the present day. It is significant that the first History of Literature should have come from the hand of one who, both in his critical essays and his original poems, had shown himself a staunch supporter of the romantic revolt.

Among those who applied critical principles to the

[1] Bodmer had published the latter part of the *Lied* (Kriemhild's Revenge), together with the *Klage*, in 1757.

older monuments of literature it must suffice to mention Wolf, whose edition of Homer, with the famous *Prolegomena*, was published in 1795. The object of this memorable treatise is to prove that the Homeric poems consisted originally of short, separate lays, possibly by various authors; that these were not put together as two connected poems until the age of Pisistratus; and that they did not assume the shape in which we have them—a shape which is still marked by many awkward transitions—until the time of the Ptolemies, perhaps of Aristarchus (circ. 200 B.C.). The bare germs of this theory had been anticipated by scholars like Bentley, or again by philosophers like Vico and Rousseau.[1] But the depth of learning and the acuteness of argument with which it was expounded by Wolf are all his own, and give it an entirely new character and value. In the next generation it was applied by Grimm and Lachmann to the *Nibelungenlied*, and to the "popular epic" in general. Yet later, it was used as a weapon in the controversies which raged round the Old Testament and the New.[2] Few books have been so pregnant with results.

Wolf.

Neither in History nor in Theology is there so

[1] By Bentley in 1713 (see *Prolegomena*, § 27); by Rousseau in *Sur l'Origine des Langues* (ib., § 20). I am not aware that Wolf makes any reference to Vico. But see *Scienza Nuova* (second version, 1730), Book III., especially pp. 428, 432, 445, 448, 450 (ed. Ferrari).

[2] Wolf himself cautiously suggests the application to the Old Testament: *Proleg.*, § 35.

marked an advance to be noted as in literary study.

History.

Yet here, too, a new dawn is to be traced. The monumental work of Gibbon (1776-1788) belongs, in spirit, to the preceding period. But in the amazing industry and insight which he brought to his sources—we may add, in his genius for massing facts and events in orderly array—he introduced a new ideal into historical research. And it was half a century before his example was adequately followed. From the nature of his material, throughout the bulk of his work, it was impossible that he should employ "sources," in the sense of original documents. For Roman history, Inscriptions are the only thing coming under that head; and Inscriptions were practically a sealed book till the days of Mommsen. We may note, however, that such writers as Schlözer (1737-1809) and Johannes Müller (1752-1809) display a deeper sense of the crucial importance of such material than had previously been common: the former, in his edition of the Russian Chronicle of Nestor (1802); the latter, in his *Schweizergeschichte* (1786-1808). In the case of Müller this is the more remarkable, as his main search was for the picturesque.

In theology likewise, it was an age rather of preparation than of absolute performance. Michaelis

Theology.

(1727-1790) and Eichhorn (1752-1827), both learned orientalists, may be said to have laid the foundation for much subsequent criticism of traditional beliefs; the latter especially, in his edition of the Apocalypse (1791). But the most original thinker in this field was undoubtedly Schleier-

macher (1768-1834), who combined a fearless criticism with the deepest piety and a heroic endeavour to disentangle the essence of Christianity from the historical forms in which it has been delivered. This was especially the aim of his *Reden über die Religion* (1799). His best known works, the edition of Saint Luke and *Der Christliche Glaube*, belong to a later date (1817, 1822). The criticism of earlier days had, in the main, been an unlearned criticism. That of our period, and still more of the following one, was profoundly learned. Schleiermacher at the close of the eighteenth century—Strauss, Baur, and Renan in the first three-quarters of the nineteenth—were at least as erudite as their orthodox opponents. The result of this, together with the popularisation of scientific theory, has been to change the whole fabric of current theology, from top to bottom.

Chemistry and Biology.

Far more startling was the progress of Natural Science. Franklin's discoveries in Electricity, it is true, fall before our period. But they were carried further, during these years, by Volta and Galvani. It is, however, in two other sciences that the most astonishing results were attained. The last third of the eighteenth century saw the creation of modern Chemistry. It saw the first beginnings of evolutionary Biology. By the discovery of Oxygen (1774), Priestley, unknown to himself, gave the first shock to the dominant theory of the old Chemistry—that which assumed the existence of a specific element, phlogiston, the sole source of combustion. And the

process of demolition was continued, with fuller consciousness of its significance, by Cavendish and, yet more, by Lavoisier (1743-1794), on whose pre-eminence in all the qualities that go to make scientific genius all authorities are agreed. To him we owe, moreover, the establishment of the indestructibility of matter, as well as the general application of quantitative methods. This was carried further by Dalton, in his theory of the atomic composition of bodies (1804). It may be added that Davy was the first to bring electrical into connection with chemical science (1806). So that, within the space of a generation, not only had the foundations of chemical doctrine been securely laid, but the methods of chemical research had been substantially fixed. Of Biology there is less need to speak. It must suffice to say that the theory of biological evolution was vaguely anticipated by Erasmus Darwin (1794), more definitely by Lamarck (1801-9); and, as we shall see in the next chapter, it was beaten out, it may well be in an exaggerated form, but with an extraordinary combination of observation and intuition, by Goethe, mainly during the ten or twelve years onwards from 1784. In this connection, it is well to refer to the work of Malthus. At the time of its publication (1798) the *Essay on Population* was naturally regarded as bearing solely on Economic Science. It was not until a generation and more had passed that its wider import was suspected. But both Charles Darwin and Mr Wallace have borne witness to the influence which it had on the formation of their

opinions as to the struggle for existence and the survival of the fittest—in other words, on the theory of biological evolution.

It is needless to dwell on the vast significance of all this. By such discoveries the world became at once more intelligible, and more mysterious, to man. His beliefs were profoundly modified. His imagination was deeply stirred. Even in the poetry of the time the effects of this may be traced. "Poetry," said Wordsworth, "is the breath and finer spirit of all science." He himself, it is true, did little to work out this pregnant idea in practice. But, for examples in abundance, we need only turn to the poetry of Goethe or of Shelley.

Consult, among other works, *Dictionary of National Biography;* Chambers's *Encyclopædia of English Literature* (new ed.), 1903; Saintsbury, *A Short History of English Literature*, 1898; Herford, *The Age of Wordsworth*, 1897; Southey, *Life and Letters of William Cowper*, 7 vols., 1836; Angellier, *Robert Burns*, 2 vols., 1895; Sampson, *Blake's Poetical Works*, 1905; *Coleridge's Poetical Works* (ed. J. F. Campbell), 1893; *The Works of Wordsworth* (with Introduction by J. Morley), 1889; Raleigh, *Wordsworth*, 1903; Legouis, *La Jeunesse de Wordsworth*, 1896; Grosart, *The Prose Works of William Wordsworth*, 3 vols., 1876; Lockhart, *Life of Scott*, 7 vols., 1837; *Letters of Scott*, 2 vols., 1894; Morley, *Burke* in *English Men of Letters*, also the earlier *Study;* Kegan Paul, *William Godwin, his Friends and Contemporaries*, 2 vols., 1876; Mill, Essays on Coleridge and Bentham in *Dissertations and Discussions*, vol. i.; *The Modern Orator*, 2 vols., 1845-48.

CHAPTER II.

GERMANY.

FREDERICK'S ATTACK ON GERMAN LITERATURE—ASSERTION OF GERMAN INDIVIDUALITY — DIFFICULTIES OF THE TASK — LESSING — EARLY WORK IN POETRY AND DRAMA—'MISS SARA SAMPSON'—LESSING AND DIDEROT — 'MINNA VON BARNHELM' — 'EMILIA GALOTTI'—'NATHAN'—ITS OCCASION—LESSING AS CRITIC—HIS LEARNING—HIS GENIUS FOR ANALYSIS—HIS RELATION TO DIFFERENT TYPES OF CLASSICISM—'LAOKOON'—LIMITATIONS OF HIS VIEW—LESSING AND KANT—THE NEW PERIOD—THE ENLIGHTENMENT—THE MEDIÆVALISTS—'STURM UND DRANG'—ROMANTIC SCHOOL—HELLENISM—WIELAND—WEIMAR—WINCKELMANN: HIS AIMS—HIS RELATION TO LESSING—HIS INFLUENCE, ON GOETHE IN PARTICULAR—HERDER: PIONEER OF EVOLUTION — ENTHUSIAST AND CRITIC — 'IDEEN'—PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY — HIS LITERARY WORK — HERDER AND LESSING—'KRITISCHE WÄLDER'—PRIMITIVE POETRY—HIS RELATION TO ROMANCE—HIS LIMITATIONS—BÜRGER'S BALLADS—HIS LYRICS — GOETHE: HIS RANGE — GÖTZ — WERTHER — 'TRIUMPH DER EMPFINDSAMKEIT' — EARLY LYRICS — ITALIAN JOURNEY — ITS INFLUENCE ON HIS LIFE AND ART — POEMS OF SECOND PERIOD — 'IPHIGENIE' — 'ROMAN ELEGIES' AND 'METAMORPHOSE DER PFLANZEN'—GOETHE AND ERASMUS DARWIN—GOETHE AS MAN OF SCIENCE—HIS METHODS AND IDEAS—BEARING OF THESE ON HIS POETRY — FRIENDSHIP WITH SCHILLER — 'XENIEN' — 'WILHELM MEISTER'—ITS AIMS—ITS STRONGER AND WEAKER SIDE—'HERMANN UND DOROTHEA'—ITS GREATNESS—COMPARED WITH WORDSWORTH'S 'PASTORALS'—BALLADS—'NATÜRLICHE TOCHTER'—'FAUST': ITS COMPOSITION—THE 'FAUST' LEGEND—GOETHE'S HANDLING OF IT—HIS BOLDNESS IN RECASTING IT — HIS CONCEPTION OF MEPHISTOPHELES — SECOND PART OF 'FAUST' — GOETHE AS CRITIC—AS LYRIC POET AND DRAMATIST — INFLUENCE OF HELLENISM — HIS

RELATION TO ROMANCE, AND TO CLASSICISM — SCHILLER — 'DIE RÄUBER' — EARLY LYRICS — SECOND PERIOD — 'DON CARLOS' — ADVANCE IN DRAMATIC GENIUS—LYRICS OF THIS PERIOD—'DIE KÜNSTLER'—PROSE WORKS—THIRD PERIOD—LYRICS—'DAS REICH DER SCHATTEN' — REVOLUTION IN SCHILLER'S CONCEPTION OF POETRY—NOT TO BE CARRIED OUT CONSISTENTLY—'DIE KRANICHE' —'DER TAUCHER'—BALLADS OF SCHILLER AND GOETHE COMPARED —'DIE GLOCKE'—LATER DRAMAS—'WALLENSTEIN'—'DIE BRAUT VON MESSINA' — CONTRASTED WITH 'CARLOS' — THE ROMANTIC SCHOOL—ITS CHARACTERISTICS—CRITICISM: FRIEDRICH SCHLEGEL — HIS INDIAN STUDIES — WILHELM SCHLEGEL — TRANSLATIONS: SHAKESPEARE — CALDERON — 'DON QUIXOTE' — 'LUCINDE' — 'ION' AND 'ALARCOS'—TIECK—'ZERBINO'—'GENOVEVA'—'OCTAVIANUS' —THE ROMANTIC THEORY OF POETRY—NOVELS OF TIECK—POPULAR TALES—WERNER—'DER VIERUNDZWANZIGSTE FEBRUAR'—NOVALIS —RICHTER: HIS HUMOUR — KOTZEBUE — ACHIEVEMENT OF THE ROMANTIC SCHOOL—CONTRAST WITH SUCCEEDING WRITERS—PHILOSOPHY: KANT — 'KRITIK DER REINEN VERNUNFT' — IDEALIST ELEMENT—AGNOSTIC ELEMENT: ITS SIGNIFICANCE—ITS INCONSISTENCY WITH OTHER ELEMENTS OF HIS THEORY—DUE TO A SURVIVAL OF ALIEN IDEAS — ITS CONSEQUENCES NOT FULLY REALISED BY KANT—DUALISM OF HIS SPECULATIVE SYSTEM—HIS ETHICS—MORE CONSISTENTLY IDEALIST—HIS SIGNIFICANCE TO THE LIFE OF HIS TIME—HIS ÆSTHETIC THEORY—THE BEAUTIFUL—THE SUBLIME—GENERAL VALIDITY OF ÆSTHETIC JUDGMENTS—RELATION OF ART TO LIFE — SIGNIFICANCE OF KANT'S THEORY — SCHILLER — THE OBJECTIVE BASIS OF BEAUTY — 'ÆSTHETISCHE ERZIEHUNG DES MENSCHEN'—ITS RELATION TO KANT AND TO 'DIE KÜNSTLER'—FICHTE: HIS ATTEMPT TO ESCAPE FROM KANT'S DUALISM—SIGNIFICANCE OF HIS EARLIER AND LATER WRITINGS—SCHELLING—HEGEL — POLITICAL THEORY OF KANT — OF FICHTE — OF HEGEL—ÆSTHETIC THEORY—HEGEL—LITERARY MOVEMENT COMMON TO THE WHOLE RACE.

Frederick's attack on German literature.

THE romantic revolt may, from one point of view, be described as the liberation of the Teutonic spirit from the tyranny of the "Latins" and, in particular, of the French. And nowhere is this more manifest than in Ger-

many itself. In no country had the influence of France been stronger, in no country had it been more oppressive. The very language of the soil had, in fashionable society, been driven out by French. And it was in French that the greatest ruler of the age delivered what, when all abatements have been made, must still be called his attack upon the literature and language of his country (1780).[1]

Yet at the time when Frederick discharged his batteries against all things German, the yoke of France had already been shaken off. The thirty years' war of Lessing against the alien had, the year before, been victoriously crowned by the completion of *Nathan;* the most fruitful works of Herder, with one exception, had already been published; the author of *Götz* and *Werther* had already written some of his loveliest lyrics and the greatest scenes of *Faust.* In the following year Europe was to be startled by the appearance of Kant's *Kritik* and the earliest Play of Schiller.

Assertion of German individuality.

To banish the tyranny of foreign thought and foreign forms, to restore to German literature the power of expressing the very mind and heart of the German race—to vindicate the indefeasible right of each nation to its own life, of every poet to embody his own ideals in his own way—this was the common aim of all

[1] *Œuvres de Frédéric II* (Berlin, 1789), t. iii. There is a violent outbreak against *Götz*, and "the abominable pieces of Shakespeare." Almost the only German writer to be praised is Quant (*sic*) of Königsberg, on account of his "harmonious" style, a quality of which readers of the *Kritik* will be incredulous.

these writers, and it was among the most memorable of their achievements. That it was only a part of their work—and, in one sense, the smallest part of it—needs hardly to be said. Individuality is, after all, an abstract term; its meaning varies with each individual to whom it is applied. Thus, in putting forth what lay in their own nature, these writers may at first sight seem to have done nothing more than is done by all writers in all ages of the world. Each of them, however, was in fact, and it would not be difficult to show that each of them was consciously, fighting for a like right in all the rest. And, what is more, each of them was fighting for the individuality of the German race as against the slavish worship of French thought and the slavish imitation of French forms and French conventions. Thus behind the claim, which every poet may be said implicitly to make, for the free development of his own genius, there lay a further claim for the free development of individuality in general; and behind this again lay the assertion of German nationality against the foreigner.

This, in itself, gives to the history of German literature at this period a significance which is wanting in other countries. In France, which had given the law to other lands, it was necessarily absent; while England, deeply as she had been influenced by France, had yet always retained her own individuality. In Germany alone it was a struggle not only against rules, but against foreign rules; not only for individual, but also for national, freedom.

And it was a struggle waged against tremendous odds. In any other country, the leaders of such a movement could have appealed to a national sentiment already in existence. In Germany there was no nation to appeal to. The very idea of the Fatherland had to be created. The Seven Years' War may have prepared men's minds for its acceptance. But it was the tyranny of Napoleon and the war of Liberation which alone made it a reality. This, in itself, isolated the great writers of the period and multiplied the obstacles in their path. Nor to any great extent could they draw upon those sentiments, whether political or religious, which may exist quite independently of the national ideal. They did not, like Voltaire and Rousseau, appeal to an unspoken dissatisfaction with the established system of Church and State. They did not work hand in hand with a religious revival, such as that of the Methodists and Evangelicals. It is true that the Pietists and Moravians had done something to give shape to the floating mass of sentiment without which no intellectual, no spiritual, movement is likely to have wide or enduring results. It is true that we meet traces of their influence in many writers between 1740 and 1790—even in one so little liable to such promptings as Goethe. But it is also true that the prevalent feeling of such men towards them was one of hostility; and that, as time went on, that hostility became more marked.

Difficulties of the task.

The result of all this was that the great writers

of Germany might almost be called aliens in their own land; that, for good or for evil, they stood strangely aloof from the general life and interests of their time. At the height of the movement, they still remained something of a caste,—the caste of intellect, striving to guide their countrymen from above, little heeding the forces which worked around them or beneath. The course of Goethe's activity is a striking illustration of this in one direction. So is the character of Lessing's work and genius, in another.

Lessing.

It is significant that the first great writer of modern Germany should, above all things, have been a critic. Creative power was Lessing's in abundance. But never has creative power been so completely under the control of critical genius; never has poet worked with so clear a consciousness of the goal towards which he was striving, as the author of *Emilia Galotti* and *Nathan der Weise.* His very dramas were prompted by the deliberate design of reforming the German stage; his greatest poem sprang out of his lifelong warfare with theological bigotry. This gives an unity of design to his whole work, such as belongs to that of no other writer. But at the same time it has served not a little to conceal his creative genius.

The literary life of Lessing (1729-1781) naturally falls into three parts: the first (1746 - 1760), the period of the early dramas, of *Miss Sara Sampson,* of the Prose Fables and the *Litteraturbriefe;* the second (1760 to 1770), the period of *Minna von*

Barnhelm, of *Laokoon*, of the *Hamburgische Dramaturgie;* the third (1770 to 1781), the period of *Emilia Galotti*, of the *Anti-Goeze*, of *Nathan der Weise.*

Early work in poetry and drama.

The first period is the period of apprenticeship. To it belongs most, if not all, of the poetry, other than dramatic, written by Lessing. But it is just here that his powers are seen at their slightest. Yet even here the prevailing tendency of his work is already to be discerned. He turns with something of contempt from both the schools which then divided Germany: from the sublimities of Klopstock no less than from the "mechanic art" of Gottsched and the French. He confines himself to the themes which, slight though they may be, most readily lend themselves to spontaneous, and therefore poetic, treatment; the loves and hates and revelries, which came to him sanctioned by the traditions of Greece and Rome, and from which, at the close of the period, he naturally passed to a generous welcome of the war-songs written by his friend Gleim—formerly, like himself, the poet of love and wine—in praise of Frederick and the other heroes of Rossbach and Künersdorf. The most notable of these poems are probably the Epigrams; and, of the Epigrams, those directed against his literary enemies, against Gottsched, Bodmer, Schönaich, Klopstock, and Voltaire.

Of far other importance are the dramas which fall within these earlier years. With the exception of *Miss Sara Sampson*, they can hardly be said to break absolutely new ground. They still betray the

overruling influence, and retain many of the typical figures, of the Comedy of France. But the most successful of them, *Der Junge Gelehrte* (1747-48) and *Der Freigeist* (1749), already show that mastery of dialogue which Lessing was to perfect in *Minna* and *Emilia Galotti;* they already show that rigid economy, that iron grip, of style which distinguishes him from all the writers of his country; and, above all, they are drawn straight from the personal experience, the most intimate convictions, of the author. The young pedant of the former comedy, the free-thinker of the latter, are both satiric studies of Lessing himself; or rather of what Lessing himself might readily have become, if his clear sight and strong will would have allowed him. It was by painting his own heart that he learned to paint that of his age and country. *Der Junge Gelehrte* and *Der Freigeist* are the first steps on the road which was to lead to *Minna von Barnhelm* and *Emilia Galotti.*

A more decided step on the same road is marked by *Miss Sara Sampson* (1755). In itself, this play is doubtless far inferior to those already mentioned. Of all his works it is the one in which the true Lessing is most difficult to recognise. The construction is poor, the characters coarsely drawn, the sentiment grossly overcharged. But it breaks fresh ground; it proclaims the final breach of Lessing with the classical traditions of the French. The very description of it, a "tragedy of common life," was a challenge to the classical convention which had decreed that, if the counting-house

Miss Sara Sampson.

and the parlour were the home of Comedy, Tragedy was to be sought only in the throne-room—or, as Voltaire was bold enough to add, in the family vault —of princes.

Lessing and Diderot.

In breaking through this convention, Lessing avowedly followed in the steps of Lillo.[1] The incidents of his play, together with some of the names, were clearly suggested by *Clarissa*. The stream of English influence, which was to count so largely in the revival of the next fifty years, had already begun to flow; and Lessing, always alive to new currents of thought and imagination, was among the first to take advantage of it. He may, to some extent, have been anticipated by Gellert in his own country; but he had the far higher honour of forestalling Diderot across the border. *Le Fils Naturel* and *Le Père de Famille*, with the discourses on Dramatic Poetry attached to them, belong respectively to 1757 and 1758; while Lessing's Essay on Sentimental Comedy was published in 1754; and the Play which put a like theory into practice in the field of Tragedy had its first performance, as we have seen, in 1755. Lessing, however, was always forward to acknowledge the originality of Diderot, "the most philosophical of all critics since Aristotle"; and a translation of the great Frenchman's two Plays and Discourses was issued by him in 1760.

The conception of *Miss Sara Sampson* is far better than its execution. This is the last thing that could

[1] *George Barnwell*, 1731.

be said of the author's next dramatic venture of importance. In *Minna von Barnhelm* (1763-67) Lessing sprang at one bound to the full height of his powers. His two later pieces may have aimed at more; but neither of them surpasses, one of them certainly does not equal, it in dramatic genius. Here he turns from the Tragedy of common life to what, in his mind as in Diderot's, was the kindred field of serious Comedy. The besetting sin of such Comedy is to lay itself out for a ceaseless flow of tears. To this danger Lessing, no less as dramatist than as critic, was keenly alive. And nothing in *Minna* is more remarkable than the unfailing instinct which preserves him from yielding to it. The one scene which must, if presented to the eye, have outstepped the bounds of comedy—the scene in which Minna believes herself to be forsaken by her lover—is, for this reason, merely a reported scene; and, still further to break its moving force, the report is made by the one person who stands entirely outside the emotional interest of the play. This, however, is merely a negative device. The salt of the piece lies in its abounding humour; not the superficial humour which depends on incident, but the far nobler and richer humour which flows from the deepest springs of character. The whole action of the play is dominated by Minna; and in her resolute control of circumstance, in the zest with which she "reads her lesson" to the quixotic Major, she is perhaps the one heroine of modern Comedy

Minna von Barnhelm.

who is not unworthy to take place beside the women of Shakespeare.

Among the great qualities of the play, this is doubtless the greatest and the most abiding. But it has a further importance, as the earliest drama drawn from a purely national source. In the *Litteraturbriefe*, Lessing had assailed Gottsched for imposing French fashions upon the German stage. In preferring the English dramatists, he had assigned the specific ground that their way of thought was far more in accord with the genius of the German race than that of the French; and, after quoting a fragment from the old popular *Faust*, he had ended with a prayer "for a German Play composed solely of such scenes as this." In the widest sense—a sense certainly less literal than he would have given to the words at the moment—*Minna von Barnhelm* was the answer to that prayer. It paints the inmost heart and ideals of the nation—its fidelity, its honour, and perhaps something more than its humour. More than this, it is cut from the very quick of the popular movement of the time; it is born of the hopes and fears, of the misery and heroism, of the war which first wakened Germany to a faint consciousness that she too was a nation. In this connection Goethe, who cannot be suspected of laying too great a stress on either the patriotic or the moral bearings of imaginative art, was the first to recognise its importance.

Five years after the performance of *Minna*, *Emilia Galotti* was produced at Brunswick (1772). The first conception of the play dates from 1758, or even

earlier. And it is probable that in the interval the design had been more or less completely recast. It was as "a Virginia of common life" that Lessing first thought of his heroine; and that is hardly a description that could be applied to her in the finished work. It is only by courtesy that *Emilia* can be called "a domestic tragedy"; in reality it is as far removed from any such partial and limited interest as it is possible for a tragedy to be. It embodies the pure, we might almost say the abstract, ideal of Tragedy which Lessing had worked out for himself, not without involuntary aid from Voltaire and Corneille, in the *Hamburgische Dramaturgie.* And it owes as little to the conditions of time, or place, or class, as *Iphigenie* or *Hamlet.* It is, in fact, a Greek tragedy in modern dress. The characters, the surroundings, belong to Lessing's own age; but the method which selects and orders them is that of Sophocles; or, as Lessing himself might have preferred to say, of Aristotle. The portraiture is more detailed, the incidents more romantic, than in the classical drama. But in simplicity, in compression, in closely knit dependence of action on character, *Emilia* is of all modern plays that which is most closely modelled on the Greek. Starting from the theme given in the story of Virginia, Lessing has deliberately stripped it of all save its purely human interest. The political motive, which was of the essence of the story in its original shape, is rejected from the first. The problem he set himself was this. Given that a father slays his daughter,

Emilia Galotti.

what characters and what circumstances are necessary to account for such a deed? The characters of the seducer and his accomplice left little room for hesitation; though the skill with which each is lifted above the conventionality almost inseparable from the part cannot sufficiently be admired. The real knot of the situation lay in the conception of the father and daughter. The father, austere and suspicious towards the outside world, jealously watchful over his own kin; the daughter, easily cowed by the first shock of danger, immovably resolute directly time has been given her to collect herself—"at once the most timid and the most determined of womankind,"—such are the characters whom the reckless selfishness of the Prince threatens with dishonour. And they are just the characters from which, when driven to despair, desperate deeds are to be expected. Yet, even so, Odoardo does not nerve himself to strike the blow until the cast-off mistress of the Prince, herself a triumph of dramatic portraiture, has goaded him to fury; until the craft of the Prince's pander has cut off all hope of Emilia's escape; until Emilia herself implores him to take her life as the only safeguard against shame. If any motive could prompt to so terrible a deed, if any circumstances could reconcile us to it, they must surely be such as these.

Emilia was a reversion, though a reversion such as only genius could make, to the stricter form of classical drama. In his next and last play, Lessing broke through all recognised forms and struck into a path where there

Nathan.

was no precedent to guide him. *Nathan der Weise* (1778-79) is a drama only in appearance; in substance it is a lyric plea for the equal rights of all faiths before God. The characters, such as they are, are firmly drawn; but they are not, and are not intended to be, more than sketches. The action, if action it can be called, does not begin until the play is more than half over; and, when it does begin, tends rather to baffle our sympathies than to satisfy them. It is not by its dramatic qualities that *Nathan* appeals to our imagination, but by its exalted passion and by the noble spirit of faith and tolerance which inspires it. The very metrical form of the poem reflects the nobility of its temper. The blank verse, which Lessing was the first writer to employ in German for dramatic purposes, moves with a sustained dignity and yet with a freedom which are nothing less than surprising. And, though Goethe doubtless carried the metre to yet greater perfection, it is questionable whether Schiller surpassed, or even equalled, Lessing in the effects which he drew from it.

Its occasion.

And yet this poem, so full of calm, was in its origin no more than an occasional piece, the offspring of a theological dispute. In 1774, moved by his faith in the virtue of free discussion, Lessing had begun to issue the famous *Wolfenbüttel Fragments.* These were, in reality, extracts from the unpublished work of a liberal divine, Reimarus, who had become known to Lessing during his residence at Hamburg. But, by a questionable deception, the editor put them forth as fragments of

a manuscript under his official care in the Library at Wolfenbüttel (1774-78). They contained an attack —sometimes, it must be admitted, in the crudest vein—upon the received doctrines of Christianity ; in particular, upon the motives of Christ and his disciples. The fury of the theologians was at once aroused. And Lessing, who had been careful to dissociate himself from the attack (which, indeed, in no way assorted with his cautious and essentially religious temper), was violently mishandled. To this controversy belongs the *Anti-Goeze*, the general name commonly given to a whole series of pamphlets directed against his chief antagonist; and, more indirectly, *Die Erziehung des Menschengeschlechts* (1780), which has an important place in the development of the Philosophy of History. All these, together with much else of his work, stand in connection with the purely scientific and scholarly side of Lessing's genius, and therefore do not fall to be considered in this place. What does concern us, however, is the extraordinary serenity of the man who, from these turbid waters, could distil so pure a spring of poetry and humanity as that which flows in *Nathan*. The central idea of the poem has, no doubt, much in common with that familiar to us in Voltaire and other writers of the time. But neither Voltaire, nor indeed Boccaccio, from whom the famous fable of the three rings is adapted, can compare with Lessing in depth or nobility of thought. The tolerance of Voltaire, and for that matter of Boccaccio also, has an edge of scepticism which is entirely absent from that of Lessing. To the

former, at any rate, "all religions," it may not unfairly be said, "are equally false." It was the deepest conviction of Lessing that, in the eyes of God, they are, in the fullest sense, all equally true. Thus in this, as in its more distinctly literary aspects, the crowning work of Lessing's life breaks through the traditions of the eighteenth century, and anticipates the wider outlook of the age which was to follow.

Lessing as critic.

Yet it is neither as poet, nor even as dramatist, that Lessing is now chiefly remembered. His most fruitful work lay in criticism. His critical writings cover the whole period of his life. The most important of them are the *Litteraturbriefe* (1759-1765); the Essay on the Fable, attached to his own Prose Fables (1759); finally, in the very maturity of his genius, *Laokoon*, published in 1766; and the *Hamburgische Dramaturgie* (1767-69).

As a critic, Lessing stands absolutely by himself. He has not the genius for throwing new ideas broadcast into the field of literary thought, which was possessed by Herder or by Diderot. He has not the talent for tracking remote affinities of imaginative temper, which was the secret of Sainte-Beuve. He has not the power of identifying himself with the genius of a particular poet or poetic masterpiece, which was so strong in Lamb or Pater. It might perhaps be said that he lacks the subtler and more delicate qualities of the critical temper. It is certainly true that they count for less than some other qualities in the general sum of his work. No reader of the *Dramaturgie*, for instance,

can have failed to observe how small a space is devoted to questions of style; though, on the rare occasions when such matters are handled, as in the discussion of what the actor can accomplish by delivery and gesture, Lessing shows a penetration not unworthy of Lamb himself. It is rather in the broader aspects of critical inquiry that Lessing is pre-eminent. In defining the functions of the different Arts, or the various branches into which each of them, and in particular Poetry, severally falls; in laying down the boundaries which they cannot legitimately pass; in striking his finger upon the exact error which lessens or destroys the value of a given imaginative work, and in tracing that error to its cause,—in all this he has, among modern critics, no equal and no second. And what is the secret of this power? It sprang from two sources—the surprising range of his knowledge, and his genius for analysis.

His learning.

Lessing was probably the most learned man of his day. Theology, philosophy, literary history, antiquities, and art—all fell within his net. And, bating the first, all contributed something vital to his equipment as critic. Of literary history in particular he had a mastery which has seldom, if ever, been approached. With the literature of his own country, mediæval as well as modern, the evidence tends to show that he was more conversant than any of his contemporaries or forerunners; while Greek and Roman literature, English, French, Italian, and even Spanish, were scarcely less familiar. "In

comparison with his enormous culture," said Goethe with reference to *Emilia Galotti*, "we seem to have lapsed again into barbarism." Had this been written of his literary knowledge, it would have been still more obviously true.

This "enormous" knowledge did him double service. It gave him a standard of comparison wider than that within the reach of any previous — we might almost add, of any subsequent — critic. And, in discussing the nature and limits of the various arts, or literary species, it supplied him with a mass of material the value of which can hardly be overrated. As his chief triumphs were won in this field, the importance of the latter point is exceptionally great.

Knowledge, however, would have availed nothing if there had not been the keenest judgment to interpret it. And Lessing's judgment, as has been said, consisted first and foremost in a genius for analysis. It is in analysis, in the power of detecting the principle which underlies a given group of imaginative creations, of resolving that principle into its component elements, and of grasping the consequences which each of these must logically involve, that his supreme power indisputably lies. In this sense, it might be far more truly said of him than of Diderot, that, of all critics since Aristotle, he is the most philosophical. His Essay on the Fable, his definition of the bounds which separate poetry from painting and sculpture in *Laokoon*, his determina-

His genius for analysis.

tion of the functions and methods of tragedy in the *Dramaturgie*, offer the nearest modern approach to the unfaltering method of the *Poetics*—"a work," he writes, "which I do not hesitate to avow that I consider as infallible as the *Elements* of Euclid."[1]

It is impossible here to examine any or all of these in detail. All that can be attempted is to indicate their general point of view.

His relation to different types of classicism.

Lessing has been described as an "emancipated classic." And no phrase could mark out more exactly his position as a critic. If by "classicism" be understood the conventions proclaimed by Boileau and other legislators of the Augustan Parnassus, then Lessing had entirely emancipated himself from its sway. In his own dramas he may observe the unity of time. But that is the only trace of orthodox classicism to be found in them; and the most convincing pages of the *Dramaturgie* are those which destroy the pretensions of the "classical" autocracy. On the other hand, for the classicism of Roman, and still more of Greek, art, for the classicism which means simplicity of conception and severe economy of style, he had an unwavering admiration. His own tragedy, as we have seen, was built closely upon the classical model. And, despite his reverence for Shakespeare, it is by the classical and not by the Shakespearean canons that he tests the masterpieces of the French stage, and finds them wanting. Indeed, it is not so much what distinguishes Shake-

[1] *Hamb. Dram.*, §§ 101-4.

speare from the Greek dramatists, as what he has in common with them, that commands his admiration. And, conversely, it is not what Voltaire and Corneille have in common with Sophocles and Euripides, but that in which they depart from them, that he covers with contempt. In other words, it is precisely the romantic element in their plays with which he quarrels.

The same tendency appears in his criticism of La Fontaine. The French poet had attempted to clothe the bare skeleton of the Æsopian Fable; he had endeavoured to convert it from a moral symbol into a self-contained drama. And it is just this which Lessing condemns. The Fables of La Fontaine, in his view, fail because they lack simplicity; because they remove the landmarks which the sure instinct of the ancients had set up; in one word, because they betray, however slightly, the working of the romantic leaven. Had he reflected that the same criticism would apply yet more destructively to Chaucer?

But there is no need to multiply instances. The very design of *Laokoon* is enough to prove Lessing's leaning towards the classical ideal. The Greeks and Romans, he urges, habitually observed the limits which are imposed by the primary conditions of the respective arts. Modern artists habitually confound them; and herein lies their inferiority. Much of what he says on this head is profoundly true. And in an age when the painter sought nothing better than to tell a story, and the poet

Laokoon.

nothing better than to paint a picture, and when the critics applauded them to the echo, the protest was well timed; and it bore fruit. But it is impossible to forget that much of the greatest poetry of the romantic period—much of Keats and Shelley, for instance, of Schiller and of Hugo—is great just because it is, in the strictest sense, picturesque; and that, speaking generally, the mission of the Romantics was largely to overthrow the boundaries between art and art, between one literary species and another, which Lessing had laboured to set up.

Limitations of his views.

This is only to say that Lessing had the defects of his qualities. His eye was so firmly set on differences that he was apt to lose sight of affinities. In his thirst for analysis he was apt to overlook the bond which unites all the arts, or the various branches of each, and enables each in turn, doubtless with many restrictions, to borrow from the others. Because there are certain forms imposed on each by the conditions under which it works, he was ready to regard these as absolutely rigid types, incapable of change, beyond the reach of progress, each destined to retain for ever the shape which had been given it by the ancients. Much, for instance, of the *Dramaturgie* is devoted to showing that the true classicism is to be found, not in the French dramatists, but in Shakespeare. In a sense this is not to be disputed. But it is only half the truth. And of the deep gulf which separates the Elizabethan from the Athenian drama he seems to have taken little count. Certainly, he is far more concerned to prove Shakespeare in agree-

ment with the spirit of Greek Tragedy than to admit the significance of his departure from its form.

Lessing and Kant.

In all this he is the mirror of his time. In particular there is the closest analogy between his work, as critic, and that of Kant, as philosopher. Both alike set themselves to resolve their particular matter — the process of sensible experience in the one case, the world of imagination in the other—into its elements. Both alike tend to obscure the fundamental unity which underlies the "manifold of experience," whether intellectual or imaginative, and without which diversity itself becomes inconceivable. Neither of them realises the significance of the idea of progress. Both alike, therefore, are analytic rather than synthetic—"critical," to use Kant's own term, rather than creative — in their temper and achievement. But both alike admit into their system elements which are hardly compatible with its general tenour. And, thanks to this very inconsistency, both alike stand at the parting of the ways, and can claim not only to have summed up the period which was drawing to its close, but also to have pointed the way to that which was to follow. And so it was upon the foundation they had laid that the philosophers and critics of the next generation were fain to build. As Fichte and Hegel would have been impossible without Kant, so Herder and Goethe would not have been what they were had they not followed upon Lessing.

A touch of romance upon a groundwork of classi-

cism—that is the seal of Lessing's work, alike in criticism and in creation. In the latter, no doubt, particularly in his dramas, the breath of romance is more perceptible than in the former. It makes itself felt in the rich humour of *Minna;* it makes itself felt still more in the glowing colours of *Emilia*, in the eastern atmosphere, the passionate pleadings, the deep religious faith of *Nathan.* Yet, even here, the classical influence pierces at every point. And *Nathan*, in particular, could only have been written by one who had steeped himself in the thought and sentiment of the great humanists, Voltaire at their head, who stood for the classical tradition in the general movement of their time.

The new period.

With Lessing a whole age, the age of transition and preparation, may be said to end. And before going further, it is well to pause and consider the main currents of imaginative thought and feeling as they ran at the moment when the new period begins (circ. 1775), and as, with easily intelligible modifications, they continued to run during the thirty years which followed.

The Enlightenment.

The Augustans of pure blood may be reckoned to have died with Gottsched (1700-66), slain by the merciless ridicule of Lessing. The nearest approach to their position was held by the champions of the Enlightenment, at whose head stood Nicolai (1733-1811), the standard-bearer of Voltaire, the friend — though not, in any but the most superficial sense, the disciple — of Lessing, the

stubborn opponent of all that, in his narrow view, ran athwart the line of liberal advance mapped out by the Encyclopedists, and, for that reason among others, the declared enemy alike of the Hellenic revival and of the romantic revolt. For the next thirty years his journal, the *Allgemeine deutsche Bibliothek*,[1] was the organ of the "enlightened" opposition. And at moments—for instance, in his crusade against Kant—he was joined by Herder and by others who might have found it equally hard to justify their presence "in that galley."

The Mediævalists.

In marked hostility to Nicolai and his squadron stood the veterans, the old guard, of Romance. Bodmer (1698-1783) and Haller (1708-1777) were, indeed, at the end of their labours. But their place was much more than filled by Klopstock (1724-1803). The strain of pure sentiment, the strain of description, even the biblical strain which played so large a part in his own earlier work, now fell into the background. And the later productions of Klopstock, his odes and dramas,[2] give voice to the love of country, to the great memories of the national past, which the Seven Years' War had awakened in Germany, and which, in one form or another, inspired much of what was most fruitful in the romantic movement. It is to the tradition thus founded that the leading figures of the open-

[1] Founded in 1766, continued till 1806.

[2] *Der Messias*, begun 1748, was completed in 1773. The *Odes* were collected in 1770. The dramas (Bardiete), a trilogy on Hermann, appeared respectively in 1769, 1784, and 1789.

ing years of our period attach themselves: Bürger, Herder, and the Goethe of *Götz*. Among the lesser lights who, in the main, followed the same tradition are the Stolbergs, Boie and, above all, Voss, the only one who maintained it without wavering to the end.

Sturm und Drang.

In close connection with this, the first line of the romantic advance, but easily to be separated from it, is the small band of men who, caring little for national traditions and thinking lightly of national demarcations, were stirred to the depth of their soul by contempt for the existing order of society, by a passion for humanity, by faith in the ideals of Rousseau. Of these by far the greatest, as by far the most sincere, was Schiller; the Schiller of *Die Räuber* and *Don Carlos*, of *Die Künstler* and the lines to Rousseau. But Herder, in some moods, betrays a touch of the same temper. So, in a less degree, does the author of *Werther*. Among the minor writers, Klinger and the other votaries of *Sturm und Drang*[1] have some affinities with it. So again, though in a very different way—with an infinitely keener sense of form and colour, and with an ideal artistic rather than humanitarian—has Heinse, the author of *Ardinghello* (1785).[2]

[1] This absurd play by Klinger (1775) has given its name to the whole period of ferment associated with the appearance of *Werther*.

[2] See the curious description of the ideal community founded by Ardinghello and his friends. Their worship consisted of songs translated from "*Job*, *The Song of Solomon*, *Ecclesiastes*, Homer, Plato, and the choruses of the Greek Tragedians."—Heinse, *Werke* (Leipzig, 1902), t. iv. p. 391.

Lastly, and separated by a whole world of thought and feeling from both the preceding groups, come the later romanticists, the romanticists without fear and without remorse; Tieck, for instance, and Novalis and the Schlegels. What distinguishes these writers from others of their time is their absorption in form, their indifference to the wider issues of thought and imagination. At a certain stage of their history, no doubt, they were led into alliance with the nationalists on the one hand and the Catholics upon the other. Several of them, indeed, passed over formally into the Catholic camp. But neither in politics nor in religion had conviction, such conviction as commonly moves men, much to say in the matter. A vague leaning towards mediævalism in the sphere of poetry, a vague contempt for the current commonplaces in religion and politics, held in their minds the place that, with most men, is taken either by reasoned faith or by blind prejudice. To this cause must be traced the sense of bewilderment which their proceedings aroused in the minds of their fellow-countrymen; the resentment, as at a prolonged mystification, to which Voss gave utterance from the one side, and Goethe from the other. The charge of deliberate deception is, of course, not to be sustained. The romanticists, in fact, paid the penalty which is commonly paid by those who are out of sympathy at once with the general life of their country and with the main body of its intellectual leaders. And, however poorly we may think of their actual achievement, it must

Romantic School.

always be remembered that they stood, in a very special sense and to a degree more marked than even Goethe and Schiller, for that absolute freedom of inquiry and that practice of bold experiment which lie very near to the heart of any great intellectual or imaginative movement. Hence, perhaps, the mutual attraction between them and two at least of the boldest thinkers of the time, Fichte and Schelling.

Hellenism.

We pass at once to the opposite pole, the revival of Hellenism. The earliest representative of this, and the purest, is Winckelmann; and what needs to be said on the subject is best reserved until a following page. It must suffice here to point out that for five-and-twenty years (1780-1805) Hellenism was among the dominant influences in German literature; that it took possession of Schiller and inspired some of the noblest work of Goethe.

Wieland.

From all these groups one figure stands markedly apart. This is Wieland, who through a long life (1733-1813) probably maintained a popularity more unbroken than any of his contemporaries. Starting as the ardent disciple of Bodmer and Klopstock, he soon struck into a lighter and more natural vein. The transition is marked by his prose romance, *Agathon* (1766-67); the completion of it by his verse tale, *Musarion* (1768). In both, the setting is taken from the life of ancient Greece; and *Musarion* betrays a reversion to Augustan influences, notably that of Voltaire. On these grounds,

as well as on that of his alleged frivolity, Wieland was denounced as the "murderer of innocence" and traitor to the romantic cause which he had begun by supporting. The breach was naturally not healed by his classical Singspiel, *Alceste*, nor by *Die Wahl des Hercules* (both in 1773). A few years later, however, he returned in some measure to his former allegiance. And the remainder of his poetic activity was spent on a series of romantic tales in verse, drawn partly from oriental, partly from mediæval, sources. To the former class belong *Das Wintermärchen* (the Fisherman and the Djinn of the *Arabian Nights*), and *Gandalin* (both in 1776); to the latter *Oberon*, the best known of all his works (1780). Here, adopting an irregular eight-lined stanza singularly well suited to his purpose, he tells the tale of *Huon of Bordeaux*, skilfully interweaving suggestions from Chaucer (*The Merchant's Tale*) and Shakespeare (*Midsummer Night's Dream*). The cruder incidents of the old romance are softened or omitted; the characters and motives are boldly, but not obtrusively, modernised; and a light air of irony is spread over the whole piece. In spirit and workmanship it offers a marked contrast to the efforts of the later romanticists in the same field. But there is something of ingratitude in the bitter contempt with which they habitually spoke of the author, who in *Oberon* produced what probably still remains the best narrative poem of any length in the language. His fame has inevitably been eclipsed by that of Goethe and Schiller. But it is unjust to forget that he was among the first

to give grace to his native language; that Shakespeare was first naturalised in Germany by his translation; that both the Hellenic and the romantic revival stood deeply in his debt; and that *Alceste* prepared the way not only for the Singspiele, but for the *Iphigenie*, of Goethe.

Weimar.

From 1772 onwards Wieland lived at Weimar, in the first instance as tutor to the young Duke. And nothing could be more honourable to him than his entire freedom from jealousy of Goethe, who followed him thither in 1775. For the next thirty years Weimar, which in England would have been no more than a market town, was the intellectual capital of Germany. Goethe was virtually Prime Minister of the diminutive duchy; Herder was its chief pastor and, in fact though not in name, its minister of education; Wieland, and eventually Schiller, lived in or near the capital; at Jena, sixteen miles away, were Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel; while the Schlegels hovered between the little town and the famous University. Never, in all probability, has so much talent been gathered in an area so small and so thinly peopled.

In close connection—to some extent, in antagonism[1]—with Lessing stand two critics, one of them a few years older, the other a few years younger, than

[1] Winckelmann, after reading *Laokoon*, scoffs at Lessing as "an University wit, who wishes to show off in paradoxes." "This man," he writes, "has so little knowledge that no answer would do him any good." *Briefe an einen seiner vertrautesten Freunde*, April 18, 1767. For Herder's attitude, see below, pp. 207-9.

himself: Winckelmann and Herder. Both had the strongest influence, an influence even stronger than that of Lessing, upon the subsequent development of German literature. Both, though in very different directions, did much to mould the mind and temper of Goethe. The former represents the classical, the latter the romantic, element in the genius of Germany and her greatest poet.

Winckelmann.

Winckelmann (1717 - 1768) is one of the most striking figures in the literary history of the time. Severely limiting himself to the study of Greek sculpture and antiquities — indifferent, as his conversion shows, to all that lay beyond—he drew from his own intellectual interest a fulness of passionate life which Rousseau and Goethe alone among the writers of their century can be said to have approached. This is reflected in the glow of enthusiasm which marks the style of his published work. It is seen still more clearly in the record of ardent friendships presented by his letters. In recovering the world of Greek art for modern use, he was at once pioneer and conqueror. Before his time it was to all intents and purposes an unknown land. When he died, he had laid the foundation of that technical study which has done so much for our own day; and, what is far more important, he had kindled a love of the Greek ideal and an understanding reverence for the Greek spirit, which was to exercise the profoundest influence upon the great day of German literature and thought. This is the more memorable when we

consider that of the purest age of Greek sculpture he knew little or nothing. All his knowledge—or, to speak more truly, all his divination—was drawn from works of the Græco-Roman period, on which the modern eye is taught to look with "a severe regard of control." But to his intuitive sympathy this was as little of an obstacle as Lemprière's Dictionary and vases of doubtful antiquity were to Keats. It was in Rome, or rather in the ideal Greece he built out of Rome, that he found his spiritual country; and it was on his return thither, after a fleeting visit to the north, that his work was cut short by murder. His most important works are *Gedanken über die Nachahmung der alten Kunstwerke*[1] (1755), *Geschichte der Kunst des Alterthums* (1764), and *Monumenti Antichi Inediti*, a collection of Plates with an introductory essay in Italian (1767).

His aims.

The immediate object of Winckelmann, in his successive writings, is to insist on the unrivalled perfection of Greek art, and the necessity which lies on the moderns of following its methods. "The only way for us," he writes, "to attain greatness, nay, to become inimitable, is to imitate the ancients, in particular the Greeks." But he was not the man to content himself with generalities. The greatness of Greek art, as he defined the matter, lies in the genius with which it fuses the ideal and the natural; or, to put the same thing another way, in the spirit of calm which never ceases to assert itself, even when the passions represented are most intense. "The

[1] A continuation of this (*Erläuterungen*) was published in 1756.

best critics," he declares, "find in the Greek masterpieces not only nature at her fairest, but something more than nature—certain ideal beauties which, belonging to nature, have yet been conceived purely in the soul of the artist." "The artist (of the Apollo Belvedere) has based his work purely on the ideal; from the world of matter he has taken only so much as was necessary to give visible form to his design."[1] "The distinguishing mark of the Greek masterpieces," he defines still further, "is nobility of form, a certain greatness and peacefulness, alike in pose and expression. The calmer the attitude of the body, the better adapted is it to render the true nature of the soul."[2] And in his later years he set himself with more and more accuracy to define the means by which this ideal effect, this balance between the material and the spiritual, between the individual and the general, between calm and passion, was actually attained. "I now go about," he writes in 1758, "with level and compass, measuring the ancient statues; and am sorry that I have not before now bestirred myself more seriously over this inquiry, which I find full of

[1] It is significant that the passage, as at first written, was without this sentence.

[2] Thus of Michael Angelo he came to think harshly: "he built the bridge to the present corruption of taste." It is worth mentioning that the former of the two sentences in the text gave the occasion to *Laokoon*. *Laokoon*, in fact, opens with the citation of a passage which occurs a few pages earlier in Winckelmann's *Nachahmung*: "Laokoon leidet, aber er leidet wie des Sophocles Philoktet." This, Lessing strives to prove, is exactly what he does not; and the difference, he urges, is due to the difference of the instruments with which the sculptor and the poet respectively were working.

enlightenment." The results appear in the two latest of his great works.

His relation to Lessing.

The affinity of all this with the work of Lessing is obvious. So also is the difference. Of the ideal element in art, of the calm which he seems to identify with it, he has a far deeper sense than his contemporary—the one representing the Aristotelian, the other the Platonic, tradition in this matter.[1] Again, the generalisations which he draws from his subject are less abstract, and therefore more flexible—they are more of generalisations and less of fixed rules — than those of Lessing. To the hard saying—"The true critic draws no rules from his taste, but has formed his taste according to the rules demanded by the nature of the case"[2] — he would never have subscribed. Lastly, he makes no attempt to distinguish the limits and methods of one imaginative art from another. This may be due to the more limited scope of his subject. But, even apart from this, it may be doubted whether such a task would have accorded either with his temper or his convictions. What is true for one art, he seems to have felt, is, broadly speaking, true for all.

[1] "For some time past," he writes in 1757, "I have spoken to hardly anyone except my old friend, Plato"—"the divine Plato," as he calls him in another letter. "I have renewed the acquaintance partly with a view to my book" (*i.e.*, *Geschichte der Kunst des Alterthums*).

[2] *Dramaturgie*, Article xix. It is true that this is qualified in other passages — *e.g.*, Article xxi., in connection with Voltaire's *Nanine*.

Apart from detail, there are three services which Winckelmann rendered to the thought and the vital experience of his day. He was the first critic to see the full significance of proportion, as the guiding principle of Greek sculpture, and to define it by generalisations built upon an accurate measurement of the best statues then accessible. By so doing, he laid the foundation of the technical study of the subject. He was the first to recognise that, however much it may have drawn from nature, and however faithful it may have been to nature, Greek art, when true to itself, always strove to interpret and to spiritualise nature. In this sense, he may justly be said to have revealed that which is the fundamental secret not only of Greek art, but of all art that aspires to the same perfection; the ideal unity which rises through and above the diversity of the parts; the abiding calm which refines and controls the passion of the moment. It was this, probably, that Hegel had in mind when he said that a new organ in the soul of man was opened by Winckelmann. Lastly, his own life was a shining proof that no liberal study, least of all the study of art, has accomplished its full work, until it has transfused itself into the very life and temper of the student. In this respect, above all others, he reverted to what was best in the aims and spirit of the Renaissance.

His influence.

"One learns nothing from him," said Goethe in his later years, "but one becomes something." The first part of this judgment is liable to mislead. Even on

the technical side, Winckelmann had taught his gen-
On Goethe in particular.
eration a lesson never to be forgotten. In expounding the spirit of Greek art, he had rendered a yet greater service; and no man had profited by it more than Goethe. Doubtless, the reflex effect on his inner and more personal life, of which Goethe speaks in the closing words, was still more important. But it is certain that no such inward experience could have come to him save through the intellect and imagination. It was because, thanks to Winckelmann's teaching, he had "found" Greek art and the Greek spirit through the intellect that he was able to draw what they had to offer into his spiritual life and make it, in the fullest sense, his own possession. On neither side can his debt to Winckelmann justly be ignored; and, in his deliberate judgment, Goethe himself would have been the last to ignore it. It is even possible, perhaps, to distinguish between the two strains of that influence in the imaginative work of Goethe—between the more intellectual and artistic, on the one hand, and the more inward and spiritual upon the other. The former, the less completely assimilated, appears in such poems as *Die Braut von Korinth* and the second part of *Faust*. The latter, the more vital and individual influence, is embodied for all time in the *Iphigenie*.

The personal attraction possessed by Winckelmann in so high a degree was denied to Herder (1744-1803),
Herder.
and the want of it has left marked traces not only on his life but on his written work. His intense combativeness led him to quarrel

with one friend after another. It led him also to take up the cudgels on matters which he either would not or could not be at the pains to understand. Hence his estrangement from Goethe, and his misguided outbreak against Kant.

Pioneer of evolution.

The fifty odd volumes of his writings cover a large variety of subjects; but they are marked by a singular unity of spirit and aim. Through them all, he is the prophet of evolution. Whether his subject be literature, or philosophy, or history, the one interest that impels him is to trace the birth and early growth of human energy in some one of its countless forms; to follow it back to its first distinguishable germ, and forward again through the more primitive stages of its development. He is possessed not merely by the idea of such growth in itself, but by many of the other ideas and sentiments which commonly group themselves around it. He has the same belief in the ultimate dependence of man upon purely natural conditions—"auch Geist und Moralität sind Physik"; the same faith in the obscurer and more instinctive side of man's nature; the same distrust of the artificiality attending the later stages of any literary or political development; the same suspicion of any approach to formalism, or even to system, in man's attempts to account for the past achievements of the race or the operations of his own instincts and capacities, which reappear in so many evolutionists of the present day. Few men have had a keener eye for the elementary—or, as he loves to call them, the "genetic"—forces in our nature. And his chief

importance is that he was among the earliest to insist —which he did almost to weariness — upon their significance, or to illustrate the extent of their operation.

Enthusiast and critic.

Enthusiasm is the dominant note of Herder's literary temper; a tendency to dithyrambs is the dominant note of his style. Not that he was, in any sense, without the critical faculty. On the contrary, if we may judge from Goethe's account of their early intercourse, it was the first thing to strike those with whom he was brought in contact. He was keenly alive to the weak points of others; and of his own work he was a judge severe enough to be perpetually dissatisfied with what he had already accomplished, and to be always reaching after something better. Hence the restless energy with which he recast one writing after another; the feverish discontent which made him regard each volume as the rough draft of the next. The pity is that the two sides of his nature, never perhaps evenly balanced, should have tended in later years to fall more and more apart. Certainly, he came more and more to reserve his enthusiasm for the first loves of his youth, and to turn a severely critical eye upon the new knowledge and the new world of imagination which were laid open with such abounding wealth during the last twenty years of his life. It is disappointing that the man who assailed so keenly the superficial philosophy of the "enlightenment" should have entirely failed to see the significance of Kant; that, after devoting the best years of his life to the study

of primitive poetry, he should have had little but scorn for the labours of Wolf in the same field; that, after hailing *Götz* and *Werther* with almost idolatrous admiration, he should have looked so coldly upon the far greater works of Goethe's prime.

All these things must be taken into account in estimating the extent and depth of Herder's powers. But they must not blind us to the great services which he rendered to the intellectual movement of his day. If he has the faults, he has also in large measure the virtues, of the pioneer. His work may have been hasty; it may seldom have been thoroughly thought out; but it covered a wonderfully wide field, and, at least during the first twenty years of his activity, it was not merely fruitful in its influence but of high worth in itself.

With so prolific a writer, the only difficulty is to select. The distinctively religious writings, which of themselves fill nearly twenty volumes, lie beyond our scope. There remain those which may be roughly classified as belonging either to philosophy or to literature. Of the former, the chief are *Auch eine Philosophie der Geschichte* (1774), *Ideen zur Menschengeschichte* (1784-1791), and the *Humanitätsbriefe* (1793), all of which deal, more or less closely, with the philosophy of history; and, in a more metaphysical view, the *Spinozagespräche*,[1] which may be defined as a reduction of that great philosopher's system to its lowest terms (1787), the *Metakritik* and *Kalligone*, a series of laboured attacks on the writings of Kant (1799-

[1] Herder himself gave it the more adventurous title of *Gott.*

1800). Of the latter, the most important are the following: *Fragmente zur deutschen Litteratur*, originally conceived as a running commentary on the *Litteraturbriefe* of Lessing and others (1767-68); *Kritische Wälder*, likewise in part suggested by the writings of Lessing, in particular by his points of difference from Winckelmann (1768-69); *Stimmen der Völker in Lieder*, originally compiled in 1773-74 but not published, and then with considerable additions, until 1778-79; and finally *Der Geist der Ebräischen Poesie* (1782-83).

Ideen.

Of the philosophical writings, the only one which makes any pretence to system is the *Ideen zur Menschengeschichte*, Herder's main contribution to the philosophy of history and, indirectly, to the theory of political philosophy. Of all his works it is the most elaborate and, with one exception, the most important. Vague though it is, it did perhaps more than any other book to diffuse, and in some measure to crystallise, those ideas of evolution which were then floating in the air, and to which men like Lamarck and Goethe were about to give scientific precision. The avowed object of the work is, on the one hand, to assign to man his due place in the world of nature; and, on the other, to trace his upward growth from a purely natural to a moral and spiritual existence. In Herder's original conception, that is, man is at once a link, the last link, in the chain of nature, and a collective being whose life is determined by reason and capable of progress. And there are moments when he seems to hold in

his hand the idea of evolution as an unbroken process, leading by an infinite gradation of changes from the simplest forms of organic, or even of inorganic, life to the highest recorded stage of human civilisation; and, beyond that again, to further stages, as yet unimagined and unimaginable, which are hidden from us in the darkness of the distant future. But the chain, which we believed the writer to have grasped, is almost immediately broken short; and the bold design comes to little or nothing in the execution. The latter of his two main theses he soon wearies of pursuing; the former he can scarcely be said seriously to attempt. At the critical moment, the determining factor is the "genetic force" peculiar to man himself; and where, as in the case of speech, that is held not to suffice, it is not a natural, but a supernatural, agency that he throws into the gap.

Philosophy of History.

In the face of these and other obvious blemishes, it remains true that the *Ideen* is a work of high originality. It is not only that, as in the matter of evolution, Herder points the way to more than he is himself able to carry out. That is, in itself, a great service; and none the less so, because it is difficult precisely to define. But the whole treatise abounds in hints, in "ideas," which have proved of the utmost significance in the subsequent course of speculation. Thus his treatment of the relation between individual nations and the natural surroundings amid which their history has been wrought out marks a decided advance on Montesquieu. Still more significant is the stress

he lays on the "second birth" that comes to man through the traditional culture into which he is born, and through which he receives not merely his capacity for controlling the forces of nature without, but the whole body of beliefs and ideals that mould him from within. This is a truth which has loomed more and more largely in the subsequent development of political philosophy. And, with the exception of Vico and Rousseau—to both of whom his inferiority must at once be admitted—it may be doubted whether Herder was not the earliest of modern writers to divine its significance. What is certain is that, taken as a whole, the *Ideen* marks an immense advance upon such a work as Voltaire's *Essai sur les Mœurs* (1756); that it did much to inspire Humboldt's *Kosmos;* and that, in some momentous points, it anticipates, though dimly and confusedly, so great a work as Hegel's *Philosophie der Geschichte.*

His literary work.

Into Herder's assaults on Kant there is no need to enter. Except as a protest against the endless divisions and schematisations of the great philosopher—a protest which is significant as coming from the prophet of the unconscious and the genetic—they are entirely futile. We may at once pass to his distinctively literary work. Here there are no such deductions to make. Here he is on his own ground; here his weakness in sustained thought is of little account. It is not, of course, to be expected that even here he should at all points be equally well armed. His judgments of contemporary literature were from the first uncertain; and,

in later years, when his spirit had become soured by poverty and by what he regarded as neglect, they betray an unmistakable tinge of jealousy and bitterness. He exalts Lessing, with whom in his heart he had little sympathy, in order to depreciate Goethe and Schiller. He mocks at *Wallenstein*, with nothing better to put in its place than the *Gustav Wasa* of Kotzebue.[1]

This was the weakness of discouragement and ill-health. In happier days he had been very different. With more than Lessing's enthusiasm, though with far less than his knowledge and analytical genius, he had carried forward the work of Lessing. He had continued it and, in his zealous acceptance of romantic ideals, he had gone beyond it. His achievement in this field naturally falls under two heads—critical and constructive.

Of his distinctly critical work, which is the less important, it is only possible to speak very briefly, and mainly of its relation to Lessing.

Herder and Lessing.

In his earliest writing, the *Fragmente*, he avowedly bases himself upon the *Litteraturbriefe*, though he speedily quits his original design for a more independent method. Yet even here the divergence, which was to become more and more marked in the years immediately following, is sufficiently apparent. In tacit opposition to his forerunners, he gives far more weight to the collective element in literature; to the influence of national temperament and tradition, particularly as

[1] See the covert allusions in *Adrastea* (1801-3).

embodied in language.[1] And in avowed opposition to them, he starts from the principle that to see beauties is better than to find faults, and that "the best way to judge an author is by the design of his own work."[2] It is manifest that we have here, at least in germ, the fundamental canon of romantic criticism; the rejection of any absolute standard, of any standard which can be applied without constant modification, to matters of imaginative art, the insistence that allowance must be made for differences not only of national, but of individual, temperament; the plea for an open mind in all judgments on literary merit. It is to be regretted that he should not have taken his own principles more thoroughly to heart; and that in later years he should have resorted more and more to the dogmatic criticism which he had begun by assailing.

In his next work, *Kritische Wälder*, he takes a still further step in opposition to Lessing; a move of no less significance in the romantic campaign. He here meets the principle which lies at the foundation of *Laokoon*, the assertion of an essential distinction between poetry and the plastic arts, boldly in the face; and roundly charges Lessing —not without justice, it must be admitted — with greatly exaggerating its importance. While justly maintaining Lessing's criticism of purely descriptive poetry,—a form which is mainly significant as a step in the incipient revolt against classical restrictions,

Kritische Wälder.

[1] Nearly the whole of the first volume is devoted to such questions.

[2] *Fragmente*, t. ii., Preface.

—he is eager to mark the points in which poetry is able to draw from the sister arts; to sweep away the rigid limitation to action which Lessing had striven to impose on poetry; to insist that poetry also has an element of the picturesque, that it is capable—in some respects more capable than painting—of presenting objects in repose.[1] Here again the romantic tendencies of Herder come to the surface, as they do in his plea for admitting the ugly into art,[2] or again in a friendly criticism of Winckelmann which appears in another part of the treatise. "*Die Kunst des Alterthums*," he urges, "is rather a historical metaphysic of the beautiful than, in the strict sense, a history of art."[3] And it is evident that, while willing to make his bow to the former, he would in his own heart have preferred the latter. The reason for the preference is plain. He looked askance at "metaphysic," not merely because he feared it might tend to shackle the freedom of the artist, but because, with the irrepressible instinct of the romantic, he was uneasy at anything which interfered with the strictest application of the historical method.

Primitive poetry.

It is, however, to his constructive work that we must look for his true self and for what was most fruitful in his influence. It is here that the vein of thought, for which he was searching somewhat blindly in his critical writings, rises spontaneously to the surface. From the first

[1] *Krit. Wälder*, i. 180-222 (ed. Stuttgart-Tübingen, 1827).
[2] Ib., i. 222-241. [3] Ib., i. 27.

he had felt the spell of primitive poetry, the poetry which is the creation of the race rather than of the individual; and, as years went on, it was round this that all the deepest elements in his nature —his quick sense of "genetic forces," his passion for tracing the rising of the sap and the gradual forming of the bud, his keen delight in the elemental workings of man's energy — came more and more to gather. The very language of such poetry came to him charged with the smell of the fields from which it sprang; laden with echoes of the "subterraneous music" of the soil. Perhaps there is no other writer, if we except Jakob and Wilhelm Grimm, who has been so keenly alive to all this as Herder. In all his most notable writings, from the *Fragmente* to the *Geist der Ebräischen Poesie* and the *El Cid*, he reverts to it with an enthusiasm that never wearies. With the matter of primitive poetry, or what by any interpretation could pass for such, he was no less in sympathy. In Homer, Ossian, the songs of Shakespeare, in which he rightly recognised an echo of popular melody, his delight was inexhaustible. And in his collection of national poetry, gathered from the Lapps, the Finns, the Lithuanians, the Servians, the Border Ballads, and an infinity of other sources in the new world as well as the old, —"The voice of the nations in song," as the publishers called it, — we have what is probably the most enduring monument of his genius. It is not only that the translations, the majority of which in their metrical shape are from Herder's own hand,

are executed with extraordinary skill. But the very design of the work, an universal *Corpus Poeticum* of primitive races, was entirely without precedent. It was an attempt to weave the results of Macpherson, Percy, and a score of forgotten scholars and travellers into one. It supplied the material for a comparative criticism which he himself did not at the moment attempt. And, what is yet more important, it was a manifesto on behalf of simplicity and colour and swiftness of action — in a word, of the romantic qualities in poetry — which woke a deep response in the heart of Goethe and other writers of the time. Several of Goethe's earlier poems are folk-songs; one of them at least, *Heidenröslein*, is an adaptation of a piece contained in this very collection of Herder's;[1] and even in his later Ballads the impulse, originally derived from Herder, is hardly to be mistaken. One whole section of the volume, again, is devoted to the Norse Songs, which Gray had already drawn upon, and which were to wield so deep an influence both in Germany and England. Another is largely given to the Spanish Romances, which played so great a part in the subsequent history both of German and French poetry, and to which he himself was to return, at the close of his life, in a fine translation of *El Cid*. Finally, in his later writings, Herder was among the first to recognise the new world of oriental poetry which Sir

[1] Goethe himself contributed one piece—and it is one of the finest —to the collection, *Klaggesang aus dem Morlackischen*. It is to be found in his collected poems.

William Jones and other scholars were just beginning to lay open.[1] In this direction he may fairly claim to have prepared the way for the Schlegels and Schelling, and even to have cast the seed which was ultimately to bear fruit in Goethe's *West-östlicher Divan.*

His relation to romance.

All this serves to mark out the position of Herder with sufficient clearness. If Lessing was the critic of the transition, Herder, in criticism as in other fields, was the prophet of romance. Here, however, it is necessary to distinguish. It is to the romance which finds its roots either in individual sentiment or, still more, in the primitive life of nations — to romance, as it came to him from the hands of Rousseau and the British poets — that he attaches himself; not to romance as it subsequently took shape in the writings of the Schlegels or of Tieck. With the purely artistic impulse, which prompted so much of the later manifestations of the romantic spirit, he had little or no sympathy; still less with the romanticism of individual caprice. He was too strongly drawn towards the spontaneous and the primitive, for the one; he was too much a disciple of the "Aufklärung," had too deep a faith in measure and "reason," for the other. In poetry, as in the other fields of human activity, it is towards the primeval and elemental that his heart went out; and it was only so far as, rightly or wrongly, he conceived these qualities to lie in it that he felt any deep admiration for the poetry of his

[1] E.g., *Ebräische Poesie* (1782); *Das Rosenthal* (1798).

contemporaries. Hence his devotion to Klopstock and, what does more credit to his discernment, to the "storm and stress" of Goethe. Hence also, to take the obverse of the medal, his irritation at the elaborate futilities of the Schlegels and, so far as it did not spring from personal causes, at the "classical" tendencies of the later works of Schiller and Goethe.

His true masters, as has been said, were Rousseau and the band of writers who may roughly be grouped round Percy. From Rousseau he had the deep vein of sentiment, the suspicion of all purely intellectual processes, which lay at the core of the whole romantic movement, and is that which united its wider with its narrower, and more technical, developments. With Rousseau, again, he shares the tendency to throw back to the more primitive forms of human society; and this tendency he extends, as Rousseau himself can hardly be said to have extended it,[1] from the sphere of politics to that of literature and art. In his zeal for primitive poetry he may fairly claim to have opened a new spring of feeling; and the debt which the poetry of his own country, and not least that of Goethe, owes to him in this matter is hardly to be over-rated. At this point it is clear that we pass from the influence of Rousseau to that of our own countrymen, from the less to the more definite working of the romantic influence.

With the later romanticists, indeed, he has nothing

[1] *Le Lévite d'Ephraim*, which consoled him in his flight from France, is a partial exception. So is the Essay *Sur l'Origine des Langues*.

in common. The qualities that part him from them have been mentioned already. In the last resort, they all flow from the critical vein in his nature; from the faith which, in common with most men of his age, Rousseau included, he never ceased to cherish in the more conscious and logical working of man's reason. No doubt, in him, as in Rousseau, this was met by a current running precisely counter. But it still flowed, though often deep beneath the surface; and, in Goethe's judgment, it was the determining force in his spirit—"a spirit dialectical rather than constructive."[1] Such a verdict perhaps hardly does justice to the originality of the man. But it points to his weakness, as well as to one source of his strength. If by constructive power be meant the power which enables a man to weave the thoughts that come to him by reflection or intuition into a consistent whole, to see the bearing of each upon the others, and to draw out of them all that is implicitly contained in them, then Herder was not constructive. His mind was intensely active. The ideas from which he started were original and fruitful. But he himself seems never to be entirely master of them. He combines and recombines them in a bewildering variety of ways.[2] But he appears to move on the surface of them rather than to work his way into their depths; to use them rather as missiles

His limitations.

[1] *Annalen* (year 1795).

[2] See Schiller's letter to Goethe (June 18, 1796). "His method is to aim at perpetual combinations, to join ideas which others hold apart. And the effect of this on my mind is one not of order but confusion." Goethe speaks of his "endless soap-bubbles" (*Gespräche*, i. 25).

against the adversary of the moment than as instruments for arriving at further truth. Hence the broken nature of his work. His first book was avowedly a collection of *Fragments*. And all his subsequent writings might with equal justice have been called *Fragments* or *Torsos*.[1]

Bürger's Ballads.

If Herder was the critic of romanticism in its earlier phases, Bürger (1747-1794) was its representative poet. And this is true of his lyrical pieces, hardly less than of his ballads. It was by the ballads, however, that he first made his name; and it is by them that he survives. Two of these, *Lenore* and *Der wilde Jäger*, stand out unapproached in their kind; and a third, *Des Pfarrers Tochter von Taubenheim*, is not immeasurably below. All three were conceived and begun in 1773, the year of *Götz von Berlichingen*;[2] though the first only—his "eagle, or rather condor, of ballads"[3]—was completed and published at that time (1774), the two others considerably later (1786, 1782). All of them bear unmistakable marks of the period from which they sprang; all breathe the "glad confident morning" of the romantic triumph. What distinguishes them from later poems of the same stock —those of Goethe, for instance, or Keats or Hugo—is that they are more completely popular in spirit; that

[1] There is a generous tribute to Herder in Goethe's *Maskenzug* of Dec. 1818. *Werke*, t. xv., pp. 203-206.

[2] "The *Götz* has again inspired me for three new stanzas of *Lenore*." Letter to Boie of July 8, 1773.

[3] Letter to Boie of August 14, 1773.

they attempt to catch the tone of the primitive ballad, and nothing more. In vivid colouring, in movement, in command of terror—and it is clear that the two first of these at any rate were regarded by Bürger as qualities essential to popular, if not to all other forms of poetry —they stand alone. But, perhaps for this very reason, there is nothing of the subtle suggestion, nothing of the poignant melancholy, which is the dominant note of *Erlkönig* or *Gastibelza* or *La belle Dame sans Merci*. Everything in them, to use Bürger's own words, is "clear, definite, and rounded to completeness."[1] Indeed, the one fault to be found with them is that they are too "rounded" and precise; and that, for this reason, they not only depart in some measure from the model they aim at following, but miss something of the imaginative effect which it is their object to produce. The effect intended, and in part achieved, is that of supernatural horror. But the very distinctness, on which Bürger prides himself, fights against absolute attainment; so does the element of sensation, almost of melodrama, in the incidents, and the metallic ring of the phrasing and the rhythm. All this serves to suggest the limitations of the creed held by the first generation of romantic poets and critics.[2] It shows the impossibility of transplanting to one age that which was the natural outgrowth of another.

[1] Preface to second edition of his Poems (1789).

[2] It is curious to see how completely Bürger regards himself as at one with Herder. "What a delight to find that a man like Herder taught with clearness and distinctness about the lyric of the people, which is the lyric of nature, what I had long felt and thought about it more dimly." Letter to Boie of June 13, 1773.

It proves how right was the instinct of those later poets who, while accepting the form of the primitive ballad, willingly suffered it to be re-shaped by the spirit of their own time and their own individuality. But the belief that exact reproduction was possible and desirable is intensely characteristic of the dawn of the romantic movement; and, without that child-like faith, it may well be that less would have been accomplished. The greater spirits, such as Goethe, speedily outgrew it. But Bürger, as well as Herder, seems to have retained it to the end.

His lyrics.

The ballads of Bürger form an enduring landmark in the history not only of German but of European romance. His lyrics can hardly claim this importance. But, none the less, they are of singular beauty in themselves; and they bear on them all the characteristics of the romantic dawn. They lack the brilliance of the ballads; but they have a simplicity, a sincerity, a passionate directness, which more than reconcile us to the loss. All that is best in them is contained in the *Lieder an Molly* (1774-1786), a pathetic record of hopeless struggle against a doubly unlawful passion. It may be true, as Schiller urged,[1] that the love painted in these poems is not of the most spiritual. But such a criticism is the purest pedantry. It would be fatal to some of the finest love-poetry ever written. And, had it been ten times sounder than it is, Schiller, with his own early poems in the background, was the last man in the world to make it. In another objection, aimed at the smaller

[1] In his somewhat ungenerous review of Bürger's Poems (1791).

poet by the greater, there is more of justice. Some of the lyrics—among them those which, in other respects, reach the highest level—may be admitted to be too lavish in expression; had they been shorter, they would have left a deeper mark. This has commonly been the besetting sin of romantic poetry—at least of that kind which gives utterance to the personal feelings of the writer. But it is not a fault which can be charged upon all the lyrics of Bürger. The sonnets, a form destined to play a conspicuous part in the later romanticism of Germany, are entirely free from it. So are some few of the more distinctly lyrical pieces —*Molly's Werth*, for instance — which are not altogether unworthy of comparison with the love-songs of Burns.

Of Bürger's remaining works it is impossible to speak. It must suffice to mention his fragments of translation from Ossian (1779) and his specimens of translation from the *Iliad*—first into rather lumbering blank verse (1771-76), then into hexameters (1784)—and from the second *Æneid*, into hexameters (1777). All these may be treated as symptoms of the same critical beliefs and tendencies which found higher expression in his original poetry.

The deeper note which makes itself heard both in the ballads and lyrics of Goethe is doubtless wanting to those of Bürger. That, however, was the secret of supreme genius—the genius which stands above all literary movements, however much it may have learned from them, however much it may have taken its first impulse from them. And, if such

supreme genius was denied to Bürger, that is no reason why we should be blind to the smaller light which he undoubtedly possessed. It is no reason why we should disparage the value of the movement by which the greater genius was so deeply influenced, and of which Bürger, in lyric as in ballad poetry, is the most complete and the greatest representative.

Goethe.

From the apostle of romance we pass to the one writer who stands above all schools; or rather, who gathers into his genius all that is best in all. The life of Goethe (1749-1832) was prolonged far beyond the allotted span. And the mass of his writings is so great that it can only be dealt with by a rigorous process of selection. His literary activity, previous to the death of Schiller, may be roughly divided into three periods: (1), 1770-1786, the period spent at Strassburg, Wetzlar, Frankfurt, as student, and eventually, in name at least, practitioner of civil law; then, after 1775, at Weimar, as councillor, and before long, minister to the Duke, Karl August—a position which, in a quite informal manner, he retained till death; (2), 1786-1794, the period from the Italian journey (1786-88) until the opening of his friendship with Schiller; (3), 1794-1805, the period of unbroken co-operation with Schiller, only ended by the death of the latter (May, 1805).

In a life of amazing industry there are few fields of human activity, literary or practical, which he did not enter and make his own. For years he

was the life and soul of the government of Weimar; superintending the working of the mines, standing between the peasants and the reckless sportsmanship of the Duke; manager of the Court Theatre, which he made one of the best in Germany; benevolent despot of the libraries at Weimar and Jena. Equally wide is his scope as poet and thinker. There are "few kinds of writing which he did not attempt; none, which he attempted and did not adorn." Reflective poetry, drama, idyll, ballad, lyric, romance, criticism—in all these he has left masterpieces of the first rank. His lyrics and ballads, in particular, are unsurpassed, and have seldom even been approached. His maxims on life and manners are perhaps the deepest and wisest upon record. In natural science and the region where science borders on philosophy he unites an instinct for empirical observation with speculative genius to a degree which is probably unique. It was in the nature of such powers to unfold slowly; and, apart from this, with a man so keen to appropriate all that offered itself from without, we must expect to find more difference between the fruit of one period and that of another than is commonly the case with great writers. It is fortunate that his power of resistance, his inwardness, was equal to his receptivity. It was this, and this alone, that saved him from losing himself in a desert of unassimilated culture.

His range.

I. (1770-1786.) Of the longer works which fall within this period the following are the most im-

portant: *Götz von Berlichingen* (1773), *Leiden des jungen Werthers* (1774), *Clavigo* (1774), *Stella*[1] (1775), *Der Triumph der Empfindsamkeit* (1777-78), and *Egmont*, which, though not published, nor in its present shape finished, till the end of Goethe's Italian journey (1788), was begun before he left Frankfurt (1775), and was mainly composed during the earlier years at Weimar (1775-1782). Of these, it is only possible to notice the two first, with their satiric counterpart, *Der Triumph der Empfindsamkeit*.

Götz.

His two earliest works established the fame of Goethe at one stroke, not only in Germany but over all western Europe.[2] Both of them, though in very different ways, draw their inspiration from romance. *Götz* is a return to the feudal ages. Feudal castles, feudal knights, feudal bishops, are the stock material of the piece. A gipsies' camp and a sitting of the Wehmgericht are thrown in, to give colour and to freeze the blood; while Martin Luther flits across the stage to give warning that the dawn is at hand. But it would be an injustice to suppose that Goethe was mainly,

[1] This curious play, which in its present form (1805) is a tragedy, was originally provided with a cheerful ending, or what was intended for such, the "double arrangement" of *The Rovers* (1798). The latter is a double-barrelled burlesque of *Stella* and *Die Räuber;* but, on the whole, Goethe is hit much more severely than Schiller.

[2] See the curious anecdotes related in the *Italienische Reise* (*Werke*, t. xix., p. 245; t. xx., p. 6; Cotta's edition, 36 vols., 8vo, 1866). All references will be to this edition. I have ventured to speak of *Götz* as his earliest work; it was in fact preceded—in writing, though not in publication—by *Die Mitschuldigen* and one or two others, now seldom read.

or even much, engrossed with the outward trappings of romance. If he goes to the middle ages, it is not so much in the spirit of Scott as of Schiller; not so much from love of the antique and the picturesque, as because he found there a fitting scene for that struggle against the tyranny of circumstance which for the moment riveted his imagination. He remarks himself, in *Wahrheit und Dichtung*,[1] not altogether with satisfaction, that the popularity of the play was due more to its matter than its literary quality; and the remark is probably just. *Götz* sprang, in truth, from the ferment of discontent against "the meagre, stale, forbidding ways of statute, law, and custom," which a dozen years earlier had found voice in Rousseau. And, if Goethe himself had not been stirred to the depths by this feeling, we may safely say that the book would never have been written. Indeed, the very passage referred to makes it abundantly plain that his studies at Wetzlar, the capital of Imperial Law, had not a little to say in the temper of which *Götz* was the poetic outcome. In spite of this, it is true that the form of the play is hardly less memorable than its matter. Its vividness, its abrupt style, its glaring defiance of the Unities, its obvious debt to the historical plays of Shakespeare — "our father and master," as Goethe calls him, in speaking of this period[2]—all these things stamp it as the offspring of romance; all combine with the historical theme and the atmosphere of revolt to make its appearance

[1] *Werke*, t. xii., p. 126. [2] Ib., p. 134.

an epoch in the history of German literature. And, if this is true of the play, as published in 1773, still more may it be said of the first draft, which belongs to 1771. Here the colours are laid on with a boldness of sweep which Mrs Radcliffe or Monk Lewis might have envied. There is a ghost who appears to wake the heroine to remorse. There is a murderer who has in him enough of the modern burglar to emerge from beneath his victim's bed.

Werther.

Popular as was *Götz*, the vogue of *Werther* was infinitely greater. And not without reason. The theme, at bottom, is still inspired by Rousseau. But here Goethe drops all attempt to throw himself back into the past—where, indeed, unless *Faust* be taken as an exception, he was never thoroughly at home. He drops the peremptory style, together with the rest of the romantic machinery of *Götz*. He trusts solely to the inherent interest of the subject, and his own splendid eloquence. The tale is drawn straight from the life of the day; it paints directly, and without a shadow of artistic subterfuge, the mood through which Goethe himself was passing at the moment—the vague sense of unrest, melancholy, and unsatisfied longing which besets the young at all times, and which was probably never so strong as in the generation immediately preceding the great upheaval of the Revolution.[1] A sense of chafing uneasiness against the bonds of an outworn and artificial society plays a certain part in *Werther* as

[1] *Werke*, t. xii., pp. 98, 134-146.

we have it (1786); it played a far more decisive part in the romance as originally written and published.[1] Yet, even in the earlier version, this is only the background to a tragedy of love, leading to despair and self-destruction. And it was this, even more than the charm of the wider theme, that took the world by storm. For passion, there had been nothing like it since *La nouvelle Héloïse;* and there is more than an echo of Rousseau in its sense of home-life, and its instinct for the gentler aspects and the finer touches of nature. "Charlotte cutting bread and butter for the children" has become a by-word; but it is impossible to deny the genius of the picture. And it needs no visit to the upper Lahn to assure ourselves that Goethe was born with an eye for the more smiling moods of nature. Indeed, it is unjust to hint even that much of limitation. His habit was to "let every change of place or season work upon him, each in its own way."[2] And to the energy of that habit, which not only stored his mind with imagery but gave it something of the child's freshness, there is abundant witness in his earliest romance.

Taken together, these two early works stand alone among the writings of Goethe. Apart from *Faust,* they are the only two of his more important pieces which can fairly be classed as romantic in purport. And, perhaps for that very reason, their immediate

[1] It was this apparently on which Napoleon fastened in his famous interview with Goethe (*Annalen,* year 1808).

[2] *Werke,* t. xii., p. 93.

influence was far greater than can be claimed for any of his later efforts. To Herder, for instance, he always remained the poet of *Götz* and *Werther;* and among foreigners the tradition lingered with even greater persistence. Both pieces are flagrantly immature. Yet both are abiding landmarks in the literary history of Germany and of Europe. *Werther* represents the wider and vaguer aspect of the romantic movement—its melancholy, its sentiment, its instinct for reflecting the changing moods of man on the outward face of nature. *Götz*, on the other hand, stands for the love of the unfamiliar and the past—in a less degree, for the vivid colouring and the hankering after horror—which contribute so much to the stricter and more determinate forms of the romantic spirit.

The immediate effect of *Werther* in Germany was to make despair the fashion of the hour. On Goethe himself it was precisely the reverse. "Once more I felt joyous and free, as one does after a general confession; I had earned the right to turn over a new page in life."[1] Fortune stepped in to turn it for him; within little more than a year after the publication of *Werther* he was enlisted in the service of the Duke of Weimar. A few years, or even months, in what seemed to him the wider world of the little court had entirely changed the current of his imagination. And among those who mocked at Wertherism, the author of *Werther* was now

Triumph der Empfindsamkeit.

[1] *Werke*, t. xii., p. 139.

the most conspicuous. Even before he left Frankfort he had joined in the laugh raised against him and his hero by Nicolai.[1] Now he set himself to fire a more elaborate counterblast. Few satires are more amusing than that in which the archpriest of sentiment turned upon himself and the sentimentalists in that "maddest" of musical farces, *The Triumph of Sensibility*. The prince, who travels with artificial scenery and adores an equally artificial bride, is covered with good-humoured ridicule. And when the dummy bride is at last picked to pieces, it is a whole sentimental library—*The Good Young Man* and *The new Héloïse* and *The Sorrows of Werther*—that tumbles from her bosom. This may be taken to mark the dividing line in the first period of Goethe's literary life. It is significant that the next year (1779) saw the first draft of *Iphigenie*.

His greatest achievement, however, during these years, apart from the beginnings of *Faust*, is to be found in the Ballads and Lyrics. Of the former, which are most conveniently reserved for comparison with his own later ballads and those of Schiller, the most important are *Der Fischer*, *Erlkönig*, and *Der König in Thule*. The latter, from which selection is an invidious task, include *Willkommen und Abschied*, *Auf dem See*, and the two *Mailieder*; *Prometheus*, *Ganymed*, *Die Grenzen der Menschheit*, and *Das Göttliche*; *Harzreise im Winter*, *Zueignung*, and *Die Geheimnisse*; finally, *Rastlose Liebe*, *Der Strauss den ich gepflücket*, and *Ueber allen*

Early lyrics.

[1] In a satiric poem, *Nicolai auf Werther's Grabe*. Ib., p. 142.

Gipfeln ist Ruh. The last three of these, with some of the others, were inspired by Frau von Stein, his love for whom was the most fruitful influence on his early years at Weimar; as his letters to her are, apart from the later correspondence with Schiller, the most instructive commentary we possess on his inner life and his labours as Minister of the little duchy.[1]

Some of these pieces are not strictly lyrical, but rather reflective, narrative, or dramatic. Of the narrative kind, *Die Geheimnisse* and the *Dedication*, which originally served as a prelude to it, are unique examples. Both are written, with wonderful command of rhythmical effect, in ottava rima; and they embody some of Goethe's deepest convictions on religion, poetry, and the poet's quest after truth. *Prometheus*, the most notable fragment of the drama which Goethe began upon this subject, is undoubtedly the greatest of the "dramatic lyrics," giving utterance as it does to the defiant joy which Goethe himself felt in creative energy, and of which he found a fitting symbol in the god-man of the Greek legend. Like *Das Göttliche*, and several other poems of this period, it is written in the unrhymed form of ode adopted by Klopstock, but touched into an entirely new beauty and solemnity by Goethe. In that form, guided by his marvellous ear for music in verse, he found the aptest expression for the grim defiance of fate, the stoical

[1] Of the prose works published by Goethe, two—*Briefe aus der Schweiz* (1779) and the *Italienische Reise* (1786-88)—were originally written as letters, mainly to Frau von Stein.

submission to fate, which struggled for the mastery in his own spirit, and round which much of what is greatest in the poetry of this period tends to crystallise.

It is, however, the simpler lyrics and, above all, the love-songs which have found their way most irresistibly into the heart of Europe; and who shall say that the popular estimate is wrong? There is perhaps no mood of love which does not reflect itself in these poems. Desire, conflict, hope, discouragement, the rapture of possession, all are there. There, too, is the passionate yearning, a yearning from the nature of the case never to be satisfied, which, in a spirit like Goethe's, makes itself felt through all these moods, even through the very ecstasy of possession. Indeed, if there is one feeling to which Goethe's poetry, and in particular his earlier poetry, gives voice with more complete mastery than any other, it is the vague yearnings, "the desire of the moth for the star, of the night for the morrow," which seems to be inbred in the Teutonic races and which the Germans expressively call *Sehnsucht*. Again and again, and not only in the love-poems, does Goethe return to the utterance of this longing; notably in the songs of Mignon and the Harper—most, if not all, of which belong to this period—and, with unapproached genius, in the lyric beginning *Ueber allen Gipfeln ist Ruh*. As regards form, the prevailing note of these early poems, apart from their haunting melody, is their ideal simplicity,—a simplicity which no poet, not even Wordsworth, has ever surpassed.

II. (1786-1794.) The Italian journey (1786-88) forms an epoch both in the personal and the literary life of Goethe. Twice he had stood on the brow of the Gotthard Pass, and looked down into the "promised land" (1775, 1779).[1] Twice he had turned aside, feeling that ties of love still bound him to the north, and that, weighed against these, Italy had "no charms" for him. But in the interval the longing, expressed in one of the most famous of his poems,[2] had grown on him with such intensity that he could hardly bear to read a Latin book or see an Italian landscape. Partly, no doubt, he was oppressed by the increasing burden of public business, which naturally grew with the growth of the general confidence in his powers. But the cause of his flight to Rome—for flight it was, or Hegira, as he called it himself—lay much deeper than this. Both as poet and as man, he had a vague instinct that he had it in him to reach higher than he had yet done. And he was right in believing that the one hope of doing so was to tear himself resolutely from his old moorings, to take time for silent thought, and to surround himself with the influences which were most likely to deepen, quicken, and purify his imagination. It was the gain to his poetic life which naturally bulked most largely in his mind both during the sojourn in Italy and in looking forward to it. "I hope," he writes on

Italian journey.

[1] *Werke*, t. xii., pp. 292, 293; *Briefe an Frau v. Stein*, i. 274. The poem *An ein goldenes Herz* belongs to the former of these occasions.

[2] *Kennst du das Land?* which would seem to have been written in or about 1783. It is alluded to in a letter of Feb. 1787, as familiar to Frau v. Stein: t. xix., p. 184.

his journey, "to set my spirit at rest on the matter of the fine arts, to print their sacred image upon my soul and to treasure it there for silent fruition."[1] But the other possibilities of the venture, the "salto mortale," were never far from his thoughts. "Heaven grant," he says after the first few weeks at Rome were passed, "that the fruits, which this life in a wider world has brought to my character also, may make themselves felt! Yes, it is not only the sense for art, but the sense for life also, which has found a great renewal" —or, as he says in another part of the same passage, "a new birth"—"in Italy."[2]

Its influence on his life and art.

Such hopes were more than fulfilled. Nothing could well be greater than the change that came over Goethe during the score of months that he spent in Italy. To the restlessness, the unsatisfied cravings, of his earlier years there succeeded a calm, such as few men have ever attained. And this is as evident in his daily life as it is in his poetry and his intellectual activities. In the former, as some have thought, it may have been carried beyond measure. The "olympian repose" of the man, his shrinking from all that threatened to disturb it, has a questionable as well as a noble side. Even here, however, much is to be said in defence. And against the poetry, at any rate of this and the following period, the same objection, though sometimes urged, cannot justly be maintained. In *Iphigenie* and *Hermann*, in

[1] *Tagebuch*, 1786.

[2] *Italienische Reise*, t. xix., pp. 148, 149 (December 13-20, 1786).

Tasso and the *Wahlverwandschaften*, in the Roman Elegies and the Ballads, there is nothing of that aloofness, that withdrawal from the everyday passions of men, with which the art of Goethe has been indiscriminately charged. This is to be traced, if at all, only in the final period of his literary life, that which falls beyond the scope of the present inquiry.

On one point there will be no difference of opinion. Between the earlier and later lyrics, between *Werther* or *Egmont* on the one hand and *Iphigenie* or *Tasso* on the other, there is a change of spirit which it is impossible to overlook. And it is from the Italian journey that this change manifestly dates. What, then, was the temper in which Goethe entered on his journey? What was it that he sought and found on classical soil? Much, perhaps most, of what the modern traveller seeks in Italy had little or no meaning for him. From the mediæval Church,[1] from Christian art and antiquities, from the early painters, even from the Renaissance sculptors,[2] he turned wearily aside. The history of art seems to have ended for him with the Græco-Roman sculptors and to have begun again only with Raphael[3] and the Renaissance architects. It was the classical artists, and those who in modern times have trodden most

[1] See the curious anecdote about his conduct at Assisi: t. xix., pp. 114-117. Compare his impatience of Dante: t. xx., p. 77.

[2] I do not think there is a single reference to any one of them in the *Italienische Reise*. For the *Frescoes* of Michael Angelo he had unbounded admiration: t. xix., p. 144; xx., pp. 84, 87.

[3] He speaks of a preference for the Pre-Raphaelites as "ein Symptom halber und unfreier Talente." Ib., p. 88.

closely in their steps, that alone appear to have touched his imagination. It was the directness and simplicity, the grace and the calm, which belong to ancient art and to such modern developments as immediately derive from it, that sank into his soul, made him a new man, and opened a fresh era in his poetic activity.

Poems of second period.

The chief poems belonging to this period—which, it must be remembered, is comparatively short—are *Iphigenie*, *Tasso*, and the Roman Elegies; and to these, though it was not actually written till a few years later, may be added, for reasons which will appear directly, *Die Metamorphose der Pflanzen*. The two first were conceived and, in some sense, executed at a much earlier date. *Iphigenie* was first written and acted, as a prose drama, in 1779.[1] *Tasso*, likewise originally intended for a prose drama, was begun in 1780, and continued at intervals between that year and the Italian journey. But during and after that journey it was recast and completed in blank verse; and in that form it was finally published in the spring of 1790. Yet, though both plays took rise before the visit to Italy, it is not by their first conception but by their final shape that they must be judged. Here, as with all great poetry, the matter is inseparable from the form; and, as poems, they belong to a region in

[1] The first draft will be found in the Weimar edition of Goethe's *Werke*, t. 39. The prose version, commonly printed in the collected editions of Goethe's works, belongs to 1781. The variations between it and the first draft are, on the whole, small.

which, as prose dramas, they could never have found place. Of the two, we are compelled to confine our notice to *Iphigenie*.

Iphigenie.

Iphigenie, which in its poetic form (1786) was the first fruit of the Italian journey,[1] is among the greatest—perhaps it may fairly be reckoned the most unassailable—of Goethe's masterpieces. A comparison with the prose version shows at a glance what is the direction in which the poet's genius was working, and what is the kind of attainment that was now placed within his reach. The characters, the plot, the incidents are in both versions practically the same. Even in language the variations are surprisingly small. But such changes as there are tend consistently to remove it further and further from the cut and thrust of ordinary speech, to give it more and more the stamp of the ideal. And what contributes still more effectively to the same end is the mere change from prose to verse.[2] It is true that the prose of the early drafts — like that of *Götz*, only to a far greater degree—falls as often as not into blank verse; a sign that, even in the earlier period, Goethe was reaching after a form of expression more adequate than he had yet found. But this only serves to make the discrepancy between aim and achievement more glaring. It is not only that we are constantly pulled up by the sharp transition from the rhythmical to the un-

[1] Its completion was announced to Frau v. Stein on Jan. 6, 1787: t. xix., p. 156.

[2] For the labour which this cost Goethe see t. xix., p. 211.

rhythmical. There is a still more baffling transition from the ideal to the matter-of-fact. Nothing can surpass the genius with which, in the poetic version, these blemishes are removed.

But it is needless to linger further on questions of form. We pass at once to those of substance and conception. None of Goethe's dramas—perhaps no drama of modern times—is conceived in a calmer spirit. None is so remote from the fret and strife of earthly passion. The knot of the play lies not in a conflict between passion and passion, nor between interest and interest, but in the dim revolt of a woman's instinct, in her resolute refusal to allow either interest or gratitude to draw her by one hair's-breadth from what instinct tells her to be just. This carries with it two results, each of which contributes to the peaceful effect that dominates the whole. On the one hand, the woman's scruples are, in the end, triumphantly justified against the more eager, but narrower, vision of those who had striven to reason them away; and what had threatened to be a tragedy, the last act in the doom of the house of Atreus, closes in reconciliation and hope. On the other hand, as regards the dramatic method of the poem, the whole stress is thrown upon the struggle waged in the heart of the heroine. Outward incidents count only so far as they cause the ebb and flow of purpose within. It is this which, as Schiller[1] thought, disqualified *Iphigenie* for representation on the stage; though he frankly admitted his inability to remedy it without destroying

[1] See his letter to Goethe of January 22, 1802.

the whole force and beauty of the poem. It is this also which, as Goethe himself was aware, sets an impassable barrier between *Iphigenie* and the Greek Drama, by which it was influenced so deeply; in particular, between it and the play of Euripides, from which its outward incidents are mainly taken. There are few dramas in which action, if by action we understand incident, plays so small a part; few in which the interest of the moral conflict or the pathos are so great. The pathos of the closing scene in especial—that in which the heroine wrings a friendly parting from the benefactor she could not bring herself to betray—is hardly to be equalled.

The play closes, as is fitting, on the note of calm which gives character to the whole. And it is just this that Goethe, like Milton, had in common with the classical dramatists. It is this that, when the ferment of youth was once passed, had drawn him to classical art.[1] It is this that he in turn drew from the classical artists. In moral sentiment, in the inwardness of its dramatic method, *Iphigenie*, no doubt, stands in marked contrast with the classical Drama. But the contrast of treatment and of method only serves to throw out more clearly the community of spirit. It is no mechanical copy of an ancient model that Goethe attempted, but a subtle transfusion of imaginative temper and ideal. In the earlier drafts of the play

[1] Even from the first, it was as much in the name of true classicism as of romance that he waged war against the false classicism of the Augustans. See his curious skit, *Götter, Helden und Wieland* (1774).

this transfusion is still exceedingly imperfect: it is only through the medium of verse that it was, or could be, adequately carried out.

Roman Elegies *and* Metamorphose der Pflanzen.

The two remaining poems, *The Roman Elegies* (1790) and *Die Metamorphose der Pflanzen* (1797),[1] bring us to another aspect—or rather to two different, but closely connected, aspects — of that which Goethe owed to the influence of classical art. The former is lyrical in character, the latter is the earliest of Goethe's attempts to give poetic expression to his thoughts on natural science and the side of religion which abuts upon it. For these reasons it was subsequently incorporated in the collection of poems known as *Gott und Welt* which, if we except parts of the second *Faust,* contains the noblest and deepest poetry of his closing years.

Common to both poems, besides the classical metre, is the power of presenting the raw material—emotion in the one case, a chain of scientific reasoning in the other—under the most concrete and vivid imagery; if imagery it can be called, which is simply the outward and visible working of the inward feelings and processes that the poet has set himself to render. And this plastic power, this genius for seeing things in the "dry light" of the imagination, Goethe persistently attributes to the influence of classical art, and, in particular, to his loving study of the Latin elegists.

[1] The prose treatise of the same title belongs to 1791. And this must serve as an excuse for the inclusion of the poem under this period.

Applied to subjects so different, it was natural that this method should yield widely different results. Fine as they are, it may fairly be objected to the Roman Elegies that they lack—and, given the method, it was inevitable that they should lack—the inwardness and the passion of Goethe's earlier love-poetry. In the *Metamorphose*, on the other hand, such qualities could under no circumstances have found place. The power of seeing, among the multiplicity of facts, exactly those which, to the trained eye, bear on the face of them the working of the law within; the power of presenting these simply and directly; the power of making them, as so presented, speak for themselves and, as it were, carry out before our very eyes the most secret processes of nature—this was here the one thing needful. And to this Goethe brought the open vision, the faculty for seeing the object before him, neither less nor more, which he had perfected in the school of ancient art and in the land where these things still lingered as a great tradition.

Goethe and Erasmus Darwin.

To what perfection he had carried this faculty may best be seen by comparing *Die Metamorphose der Pflanzen* with *The Loves of the Plants* by Erasmus Darwin, published a few years earlier (1789), and now remembered chiefly by the scathing parody in the *Anti-Jacobin*. Contrast the simplicity and directness of Goethe with the mealy-mouthed allusiveness and the frigid personifications of Darwin, and we have a measure of the gulf which separates true poetry in such mat-

ters from false and pretentious tinsel.[1] And the contrast becomes yet more significant, when we remember that Goethe's theme was in itself, and in less skilful hands would inevitably have remained, far more abstract than Darwin's. The latter confines himself to that side of the subject in which the analogy between the merely physical process and the life of man is closest, and which, for that reason, most obviously lends itself to poetic purposes. Goethe, on the other hand, boldly takes the whole story of evolution in plant-life for his theme. And, thanks to his genius for seizing the type through the individual, the process in the finished work, his poem is full of movement. It appeals not merely to the intellect, but to the eye and the imagination.

Goethe as man of science.

It is from this period that we may fairly date Goethe's devotion to the systematic study of natural science. During the last three or four years of his life at Weimar[2] he had felt himself more and more drawn to these subjects,—mineralogy, botany, and osteology being those which attracted him the most. And early in 1784 he had made the discovery, that of the intermaxillary

[1] The following is a not unfair specimen :—

> "Two brother swains of Collin's gentle name,
> The same their features and their forms the same,
> With rival love for fair Collinia sigh,
> Knit the dark brow and roll the unsteady eye.
> With sweet concern the pitying Beauty mourns,
> And soothes with smiles the jealous pair by turns."
>
> —*Loves of the Plants*, canto i.

[2] Roughly, from 1782. See his letter to Knebel of November 21, in that year.

bone in man, which forms so important a link in the doctrine of human evolution, and on which his fame as man of science is largely based.[1] But it was in Italy that the passion of natural science seems first to have taken full possession of him. And it was in the years immediately following his return from Italy that he was most completely absorbed in it. The light which his scientific aims and methods throw on his poetry is deeply significant; and it is mainly for that reason that they fall to be considered in the present work.

His methods

The method which he seems habitually to have followed in these matters was one of empirical inspection. He prided himself on having no preconceived ideas, no "system" to support. And such was the keenness of his eye, his power of divining the inner law in the outward phenomenon, that in his hands the method—perilous in itself, and, in the more abstract matter which forms the subject of the *Farbenlehre*, admittedly disastrous—yielded astonishing results. It enabled him to anticipate the professors, much to their chagrin, in more than one discovery of the first moment; and, what was yet more important, to retain that sense of unity in the infinite diversity of nature which the more technical inquirer is so apt to lose.

Among the many qualities necessary to the full equipment of the man of science, there are two which in Goethe are blended to a degree rarely, if

[1] See his letters to Frau v. Stein of March 27, April 13, June 27, 1784.

ever, to be found in other men: an intense apprehension of the individual object on the one hand; an equally intense apprehension of the universal, as working in and through the individual, upon the other. At times, in what might be taken for a vein of pure empiricism, he mocks at the pedantry which calls on the naturalist to "renounce his five senses" and "have nothing to do with the living conception of things."[1] At other times, in a spirit which might have been that of Plato, he finds the pure idea of the horse visibly embodied in the noble frieze of the Parthenon, and is confident that he has discovered the invisible archetype of all plants as he observes and handles the rich vegetation of the south.[2] More often, however, his view comes nearer to that of Spinoza, who, of all philosophers, had the deepest influence upon him. "The more we learn of individual things, the more we learn of God"—a view as alien to the materialist temper as it is to the Platonic, and alien to each because it strives to reconcile both—is the watchword of Spinoza. It is the watchword also of Goethe. A few sentences from the *Italienische Reise* will show how, interwoven with a more Platonist tendency, it yet served as the clue to all his scientific investigations. "At the sight of this wealth of forms," he writes to Herder, "the old whim recurred to my mind: Amid

And ideas.

[1] See letter to Merck of April 8, 1785.

[2] Compare what he says about the "Urthier," t. xxxii., p. 10. It is curious that Schiller's scepticism as to the "Urpflanze" came near to breaking off the friendship of the two men, at the very beginning. *Annalen*, year 1794.

this host of plant-forms, could I not discover the archetypal plant? Such a thing there must be; for why recognise this or that form as a plant, unless they were all formed after one pattern? . . . The archetypal plant is the most wonderful thing in the world; nature herself might envy me the discovery of it. With this model, and the key to it, it is possible to discover new plants to infinity. And such plants would be logically possible. That is, they would be such as might exist, even if they do not; and exist, not as picturesque and poetic fictions, but as having an inner necessity and truth." So far, we might be listening to a Platonist. The words that follow bring us back to the concrete and individual. "It had dawned upon me that the organ of plant-life in which the true Proteus lies concealed is that which we are used to call the leaf. It is the leaf which hides, and yet reveals, itself in every stage of growth. Trace it forwards or backwards, the plant is never anything but the leaf."[1]

Bearing of these on his poetry.

Here was a principle at once concrete and ideal,—a principle which kept his eye steadily on the individual object, and yet drove him to look through that outward object to the working of a vital force within. And seizing as he did with the instinct of genius upon the most vital of all the processes which blend in the living organism, the process of growth, he was able to apply the law which he discerned in it, the law of development, to all the other fields of

[1] *Italienische Reise*, t. xx., pp. 71, 72 (April 17, May 17, 1787).

natural science; to animal life no less than to the life of plants; to the formation of crystals no less than to the evolution of the body of man. And, however various the manifestation, he was for ever haunted by a sense of the unity of the plastic power which works behind it; the unity which binds all nature into one living whole; the unity which man conceives to himself — which Goethe, at any rate, learned more and more to conceive to himself — as coming from God. It is in the later poems, in those which fall either almost or altogether beyond the scope of the present work, that this conception finds its most imaginative expression; in the collection called *Gott und Welt*, the greater part of which belongs to the last twenty, or indeed to the last twelve, years of his life; above all, in the opening hymn, *Im Namen dessen der sich selbst erschuf*, which was written in 1816, and which represents the high-water mark of this side of his genius.[1]

The main thing, however, to notice in this field of his activity is the inseparable bond which, alike to his intellect and his imagination, existed between the particular and the universal; his absolute refusal to regard the individual except in the light of the general law which it reveals, the vital principle except in and through the individual which visibly embodies it. This was the secret of his achievement, as man of science.

[1] The song of the Earth-spirit, however, must be ranked with the greatest of these poems; and it was written probably as early as 1774. *Weltseele* belongs to 1804, *Eins und Alles* to 1823, *Vermächtniss* to 1829.

It was largely also the secret of his greatness, as poet. Few poets are so concrete, few have taken up so much of the common stuff of life into their poetry. Yet the common always ceases to be common in his hands; and however concrete the matter, it is always touched and softened by the golden light which is shed around it by the poet. In his imaginative, as in his scientific, work he has the instinct for hinting the ideal through the particular; he has spells for making us see "the translucence of the general in the special." And this Coleridge held to be, of all imaginative faculties, that which is the most essential and the highest.

III. (1794-1805.) During the years which followed his return from Italy, Goethe had buried himself more and more in the study of nature. It was intercourse with Schiller that brought him back to his native element of poetry; that "gave me," as he wrote a few years later, "a second youth and made me once more, what I had as good as ceased to be, a poet."[1] The strange thing is that, in the literary partnership which resulted, it was the lesser, not the greater, poet who contributed the more to the common stock; that, as the correspondence abundantly testifies, it was not Schiller, but Goethe, who owed most, at any rate in detail, to the alliance.

Friendship with Schiller.

The least attractive fruit of this memorable friendship, and one of the earliest, is to be found in the *Xenien*, a collection of epigrams on matters literary and philosophical, which was, in

Xenien.

[1] Letter to Schiller of Jan. 17, 1798.

the strictest sense, the joint work of the two poets.[1] The design suggested itself to Goethe at the end of 1795; it was eagerly taken up by Schiller, and the two worked busily at their game of mischief during the first half of 1796. The literary skill and brilliance of these pieces is often very great. But it may be doubted whether a great writer ever does well to attack his brethren of the craft. And, in the case of Goethe, the inevitable consequence was to widen that gulf between him and the public which was the source of so much that goes to weaken his later work.

Apart from the *Xenien*, which from their nature made more stir than they were intrinsically worth, the chief works of this period were *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* (1796), *Hermann und Dorothea* (1797), the Ballads (1797), and *Die Natürliche Tochter* (1803). To these may be added *Faust*, the first part of which, though not published in its present form till 1808, was practically completed during these years; while, before the first part was finished, the second was already begun.

Wilhelm Meister.

With the exception of *Faust*, there is none of Goethe's works which lay so long on the anvil as *Wilhelm Meister*. The beginnings of the Romance go back as far as 1777; the

[1] The brunt of the assault fell upon Nicolai and the Philistines; upon Reichardt and the "apostles of freedom"; upon Goethe's scientific opponents; upon Friedrich Schlegel, who had spoken disrespectfully of Schiller's *Horen;* and upon the Stolbergs, who had already betrayed the Catholic leanings which later declared themselves among the Romantics, as a body. See *Goethegesellschaft*, t. viii.

first conception ("kotyledonartig") probably to the preceding year. For the next nine or ten years, particularly in those immediately before the Italian journey, it was constantly present to his imagination, and, in some shape or other, was apparently written to the extent of about half its present length. It is mentioned, but as a task for the future, in the course of that journey. It was again taken up in earnest shortly before the beginning of Goethe's intimacy with Schiller. And it was completed, with insistent reference to Schiller's advice and criticism, during the first two years of their friendship.[1]

Its aims.

It was hardly in the nature of things that a book, written over so long a time, should have the unity which we look for in a work of imagination. And it is easy to see that Goethe's purpose at the end was not what it was at the beginning. When he first set himself to the task, his main interest lay in the attempts then making on every hand, and nowhere more than at Weimar itself, to create a national theatre for Germany. In a minor degree, it lay with the various secret societies, Freemasons' and others, which in the general disintegration preceding the Revolution were making themselves felt here and there throughout western Europe. There were, moreover, the difficulties which Goethe himself had been called on to face in his change from burgher life to the aristocratic surroundings of a court, and which, for purely personal reasons, tended to bulk extravagantly

[1] See in particular Schiller's letters of July 2, 3, and 5, 1796.

large in his judgment and imagination. In the latter part of the Romance these things, if we except the secret society and its mummeries, have faded into the background. Their place is taken by the deeper issues of art and its bearing upon life, by all that makes for the growth of individual character, by the discipline of action, education, and religion. The butterfly actresses, the toy counts and barons, of the earlier part give way to impassioned sentimentalists, to "beautiful souls," to cold-blooded men, and managing women, of the world. The dramatis personæ are almost entirely different at the end from what they were at the beginning. The story is held together by nothing stronger than the character of the hero—who, as one of the personages remarks with engaging frankness, "has no character at all"—and the shadowy figures of Mignon and the Harper.

Its stronger and weaker side.

The wonder is that Goethe should have been able to conceal these inherent defects as skilfully as he has, and that, with blemishes so obvious, the story should still retain, as it does retain, its hold upon the reader. That it does so is partly due to the halo of poetry and pathos which surrounds Mignon, partly to the interest with which a wise man must always be followed when he lets us into the secret of his ripest thoughts on subjects of such importance. Therese and Natalie, who (Philine excepted) are the only substantial characters of the book, clearly embody Goethe's ideal of two types of womanhood, and they interest the reader at least as much on that account as for the part

they play in the economy of the story. They are hardly less a mirror of his opinions on life than the discussions on *Hamlet*, earlier in the story, are of his opinions about art.

In one sense, this is a condemnation of the book. And nothing, it may fairly be held, can excuse either the slenderness of the story or the weakness of the character round which it is supposed to centre. Everything, in fact, is sacrificed to the inner history of the hero, which is really a blurred and one-sided reflection of the inner history of the author. Outward incidents there are, and of the most motley nature. But they are obviously inserted to keep up the spirits of the reader; they have little or no relation to the real theme of the romance. And not even Goethe's theory of the Novel and its functions—the "picaresque" theory, too manifestly furbished up for the occasion[1] —can persuade us to the contrary. Compare *Wilhelm* with the two supreme picaresque novels of the century—compare it with *Gil Blas* or *Tom Jones*. In both of these the incidents may be too loosely strung for modern taste. But at least they are of the essence of the design; at least they are of enthralling interest in themselves, and serve, as nothing else could have done, to bring into clear light the respective characters of the heroes. None of these merits can be claimed for the incidents of *Wilhelm*. They stand quite apart from the main thread of the story; they throw little light on its characters, and the reader takes but a languid interest in the pranks played upon a half-

[1] *Wilhelm Meister*, Book. iv. chap. vii.

crazy Count or the throes of a knock-kneed Cœlebs in search of his son.

The next work of importance, *Hermann und Dorothea*, is far less open to dispute. With *Faust*, *Iphigenie*, and the greater lyrics, it may be reckoned among the most perfect efforts of his genius. Here, once again, he employs a classical metre; this time the hexameters on which he had already tried his hand in his "profane Bible," *Reineke Fuchs* (1793). In *Hermann* this is far more delicately handled than in the earlier poem; and Goethe himself admits that he had learnt much from the *Luise* of Voss (1795).[1] Whether any skill could suffice to adapt the Homeric instrument to a language so rebellious in "quantity" and so overladen with consonants as the German is a serious question. And if in any point *Hermann* is assailable, it is undoubtedly on the score of metre. In choice of incident and management of the story, in the vividness of the characters and their outward setting, above all, in its profound humanity and pure, steady

Hermann und Dorothea.

[1] *Annalen*, year 1793. *Luise*, the best known and the best of Voss's *Idylls*, might fairly be described as the raw material of *Hermann*. It gives a picture—vivid, accurate and attractive—of all that endears the home-life of the Germans to those who are fortunate enough to know it. All this Goethe takes and, by his genius, raises to a higher power. The most important of Voss's other works is his translation of Homer in hexameters; the *Odyssey* in 1781, the *Iliad*, with the *Odyssey* recast (in the opinion of most judges spoiled, certainly roughened), in 1793. His later years were embittered by an angry strife with the Romantics, in which the chief episode was his unblessed attack on Stolberg, who had been his most intimate friend, after his conversion to Catholicism: *Wie wird Fritz Stolberg ein Unfreier?* (1819).

glow of style, it has a place entirely by itself in modern literature.

Its greatness.

The subject, as Goethe says, is such as a poet "does not find twice in a lifetime";[1] so full of life and colour, so complete in itself, and yet so rich in glimpses of the hard world of wars and tumults which lies beyond. It is significant that the background, which in the first instance presented the migration of Protestant refugees in the time of Frederick the Great, was deliberately shifted by Goethe to the flight of the Rhinelanders before the armies of revolutionary France. The change was clearly made with a double object: to appeal more directly to the forebodings of the moment, and to replace a comparatively trivial outlook by one opening straight on the greatest issues of modern history. This was a concession—such as Goethe rarely made—to the political movement of his time, and no one can doubt that the poem, alike in detail and in general effect, gained immeasurably by the alteration. On this dark background of tragedy and passion Goethe has painted one of the sunniest pictures that ever rose before the imagination of a poet. The little town with the typical figures of its thriving burghers, the first spring of love in the youth's heart, his sudden resolve, his father's harshness and the tenderness of his mother, the ready helpfulness of the stranger girl, her rapid decision, her outburst of honest indignation when she believes herself insulted, her willingness to pardon when she

[1] Letter to Heinrich Meyer, April 28, 1797.

learns the truth, the new sense of strength and confidence which she, like her lover, draws from the sudden bond thus knit between them,—these are some, and some only, of the touches by which Goethe wrought out the mellow harmonies of his fresco. Never since the days of *Werther* had he worked so swiftly, or with such easy mastery of his matter. In none of his writings, if we except *Iphigenie*, is the unity of tone so triumphantly preserved from beginning to end.

Compared with Wordsworth's Pastorals.

The English poems with which we instinctively compare *Hermann und Dorothea* are the *Story of Margaret* and *Michael*, both of which were written within a few years—the former, perhaps, in the very year—of Goethe's masterpiece. But the contrast is far greater than the resemblance. In *Hermann* the Idyll rises almost to the flight of an epic. In the *Pastorals* it approaches more nearly to tragedy. In the former we have a wide landscape—cornland, orchard, vineyard—lit by a level sun from beneath a stormy bank of cloud. In the latter, a bleak upland valley, strewn with desolate rocks and lighted only by the stars. The one is bright with the ruddy glow of a summer sunset; the other is darkness, relieved only by the inner light of endurance and unconquerable love.

Ballads.

To the same year as *Hermann* belong the two ballads, *Die Braut von Korinth* and *Der Gott und die Bajadere*, written in friendly rivalry with *Der Taucher* and other ballads of Schiller. Nothing could well be greater than the difference

between the ballads of this and of the earlier period. *Erlkönig*, *Der Sänger*, *Der König in Thule* proclaim themselves of the stock of popular poetry. They are charged with subtle echoes of the universal instincts of men and remote memories of the past. The two later ballads, whatever may be the source of their outward incidents, have at bottom nothing in common with this. The setting of both is doubtless romantic. Each of them has an ample touch of the supernatural. But the real inspiration of each is drawn from the personal temper of the poet, from his reasoned hatred of asceticism and his deliberate faith in the redeeming power of love. The change of spirit is fitly reflected in the style, from which the popular note is conspicuously absent. *Die Braut*, in particular, is full of effects elaborately prepared, of mysterious suggestions which bear more than a faint analogy to those of *Christabel*. Apart, however, from such questions of affinity, the two ballads have a place apart among the poems of Goethe. On the smaller scale they represent that perfection of narrative power which *Hermann* had already shown in large. And they have a depth of passion which neither *Hermann* nor any other of the narrative poems can be said to have approached.

During the next five years Goethe published little or nothing of importance. Much of his time was taken up with the importunate *Farbenlehre*, and various pieces of criticism embodied in *Propyläen*. He was also busied with the *Achilleis* and with *Faust*.

Die Natürliche Tochter, which marks his decisive return to poetry, was written between the end of

1800 and 1803; and, contrary to Goethe's usual practice, it was begun and ended in the deepest secrecy. The remaining two pieces of the trilogy which he had designed on the subject were never more than sketched; and this play remains his one serious endeavour to give poetic form to the great issues stirred by the Revolution. In that respect it is no more successful than his other attempts to idealise a historical subject. Here, as always, it is the personal element which alone appeals to his imagination. Even on this side it will probably be felt that his hand has, in this instance, lost something of its cunning. The incidents which bring about the catastrophe are too vaguely indicated; the characters themselves are vaguely drawn, and seem to be types rather than individuals. There is the unscrupulous courtier, the pliant ecclesiastic, the feebly resisting Hofmeisterin, the chivalrous councillor who comes forward as a friend in need to save the heroine from the fate to which her enemies have condemned her. All these are little more than shadows, phantom figures moving through a dream of which the clue is carefully concealed from the spectators. The only personage of any substance, as the only one who enjoys the privilege of a proper name, is Eugenie; and even she is idealised to the very farthest point compatible with reality. In spite of these drawbacks, the play, like almost everything else that Goethe wrote, has a strange interest of its own. But it betrays, and is perhaps the earliest of his works which can be said de-

Natürliche Tochter.

cisively to betray, that deliberate haziness of touch which reaches its climax in the "phantasmagoria" of the second part of *Faust*. Here, moreover, as in that crowning instance, the poet is hampered to some extent by the attempt to combine an essentially romantic subject with the typical forms of the classical drama. And it is hardly surprising that, in the face of this and other inherent difficulties, as well as from the coolness with which the first part of the trilogy was received by Herder and others, Goethe should tacitly, but most reluctantly, have dropped the completion of his original design.[1]

A review of Goethe's poetic activity fitly closes with a notice of *Faust*. This, the most famous and surely the greatest of all his works, was his lifelong companion. It seems to have begun as early as 1770; and it was not completed, if indeed it can be said ever to have been completed, until a few weeks before his death. No other of his writings reflects so completely either the growth of his spiritual ideals or the changes through which he passed as a poet. The opening scenes and the story of Gretchen, which belong for the most part to the earlier '70's, embalm the passionate longings and questionings of his youth; the earlier scenes of the second part render, with grave satire, the ripest experience of his manhood and middle life; the later scenes bring us face to face with the unresting labours and the mellow tolerance of the Indian summer

Faust.

[1] *Annalen*, year 1803.

at the close. In the same way the first part gives us the romantic impulse which was the strongest inspiration of the years preceding the Italian journey. The episode of Helena represents, though with many counter-currents, the classical influence which dominated the next twenty years of his life. Finally, in the closing act, we return to a softened echo of the romantic music of his youth.

Its composition.

Without going into minute detail, it should be added that the bulk of the first part was completed before the journey to Italy; though it is significant that it is precisely the most "romantic" scenes—Faust's attempt at self-destruction, the Easter hymn, the very compact with Mephistopheles[1]—which were composed the latest. Of the second part, it would appear that the scene between Mephistopheles and the Baccalaureus, parts of the third act (*Helena*) and perhaps the opening scene of the first act, the awakening of Faust, were composed first: all these before the end of the century. And it is certain that the fourth act, which is undoubtedly the weakest part of the whole drama, was written last. As to publication, it need only be mentioned that the first part, with the exception of certain scenes mostly indicated above, was published as a "fragment" in

[1] All these seem to have been written after 1790. It was at Rome, of all places in the world, that the Hexenküche was composed (spring of 1788). The earliest known version of *Faust* is that discovered (in 1887) among papers once belonging to Fräulein v. Göchhausen, maid of honour at the Weimar Court. It is supposed to be a copy of the text as brought by Goethe from Frankfurt in 1775. See the Weimar edition of Goethe's *Werke*, t. 39.

1790; that it was reissued, as completed with Dedication, Prelude, Prologue, and the rest, in 1808; that *Helena* was put forth as a separate poem in 1827; and that the second part was published as a whole, after the poet's death, in 1832.

The theme of the drama, it need hardly be said, is the legend of the man who sells his soul to the devil.

The Faust *legend.*

It is the legend which had fascinated the imagination of Christendom from the sixth century to the time of Lessing; the legend which, in one form, had been treated by Marlowe and the German *Faustbuch* in the sixteenth century; and, in another form, by Rutebœuf (*Miracle de Théophile*) in the thirteenth century, and by Calderon (*El Magico Prodigioso*) in the seventeenth. Of these versions the *Faust* of Goethe may be described as a fusion. With him, as with Marlowe, the compact is prompted by despair. With him, as with Marlowe, it carries defiance, complete and absolute, of the Almighty. But, as with Calderon, a door of repentance is left open. In love and in the service of men Faust finds the forgiveness which the scoffing spirit reckoned to be for ever forfeited. By this change something, no doubt, is lost to the imaginative effect. There is nothing in *Faust* to compare with the appalling force of the closing scene in Marlowe. But on the whole the gain is such as more than to compensate for the inevitable sacrifice. The conception of Goethe will seem to most minds more satisfying than that of Marlowe. And the final pardon of Faust, his welcome by the spirit of Margaret, is, in its own kind

no less impressive to the imagination, and it is no less impressively worked out by the poet, than the heartrending despair of Faustus.

In describing the general scope of the drama, it has been necessary to lay stress on the second part. It is the first part, however, which has always been justly reckoned the greater achievement, and it is with the first part that we are here mainly concerned. What are the qualities which make it the most representative of Goethe's works? What are the qualities which have given it a unique place among modern poems?

Goethe's handling of it.

The fascination of the legend itself, the romantic appeal of the whole story, must doubtless be held to count for much. But that is not all; nor is it even the greater part. It may have been, and probably was, this that first drew Goethe to the subject. But, as we have seen, it was just the most romantic incidents of the story that he was slowest to take in hand. It was clearly the human side of the poem that stirred his imagination the most deeply. It is the human side of it that has stamped itself most indelibly upon the imagination of his readers; the weariness of knowledge which comes on man, as he beats his wings against the inexorable limits of his powers; his struggles to force his way behind the surface of nature to her life and heart; his craving to change the "grey" life of thought for the stir of action and of love,—these are the things which give the pulse of life to the first part of the drama; these, and the tragic tale of love and despair, to which they

naturally give birth. Here the execution is as powerful as the conception; and this is as true of the earlier scenes, which paint the spiritual anguish of Faust and his vain efforts to break the barriers of man's reason, as it is of the later scenes which tell the yet more human tale of reckless passion and its miserable end. Nothing is more surprising than that the same hand which wrote the one should also have written the other,—that the genius which conceived and gave imaginative form to the worldly wisdom and the poignant intellectual experience of the opening scenes should also have been capable of the tenderness and passion of the close. In the former, there is hardly a line which has not passed, and deserved to pass, into a proverb; while the latter is at once the truest and the simplest poem on the eternal theme of love that has been written since Shakespeare.

His boldness in recasting it.

Fault has sometimes been found with Goethe for interweaving material so homely as a love-story with the magic web of the Christian legend. In fact this, or rather the courage which prompted this and other changes, was the secret of his triumph. The legend came to him clogged with a train of thought and feeling wholly alien to the modern spirit. And it was a true instinct which led him to recast it from top to bottom; to retain only the bare groundwork of the original fabric, and to fill it in with themes drawn straight from the vital experience of his own day, or from those passions which remain the same from one generation to another. In truth, it is exactly where he re-

casts most boldly that he strikes home most closely to the heart and the imagination. What is it that has made *Faust* the best known and loved of all modern poems? It is the loves of Faust and Gretchen; it is the mockery of Mephistopheles; it is the despair of Faust, his bitter sense of the innate impotence of man's reason, the emptiness of all that man, in his folly, counts as knowledge. No one of these is, in anything more than name, to be found in the original legend. All are, in the strictest sense, the creation of Goethe. They breathe the spirit of the time in which his own lot was cast. They reflect his own outlook upon life; his own reading of the forces that hem man in from without, of the weakness that cripples him from within, of the strength by which, if it be wisely sought, these may be met and overcome. As he had dealt with the classical theme in *Iphigenie*, so he deals with the romantic theme in *Faust*. He remoulds it freely to his own purpose; he humanises it; he handles it not as an antiquarian, but as a poet and a modern.

His conception of Mephistopheles.

Nowhere is this seen more clearly than in his conception of Mephistopheles. Here, if anywhere, the poet is frankly human. Here, as in the love-story, he rises to the full height of his powers. Goethe's evil spirit has not the majesty of Milton's, nor the sombre melancholy of Marlowe's. But, as an incarnation of mockery and cynicism, as "the spirit who incessantly denies," he is no less impressive; he stands nearer to man, and, for that reason, he lends himself more readily

to dramatic treatment. The tempter of Milton, and in a less degree of Marlowe, lays his train from without. Mephistopheles is a perpetual echo of all that is base and trivial in the soul within; a shadow cast from the undying levity which haunts the inmost recesses of man's heart; a ghastly double of the worser self which refracts and distorts each fresh experience that confronts us. Reason, love, despair, humanity itself — each in turn is poisoned and perverted by the voice of cynical mockery, which only puts into words the barren doubt, the reckless selfishness, that whispers within. Throughout the first part of the drama the character is sustained with unflagging spirit. In the second part, Mephistopheles, like the Satan of *Paradise Lost*, fades into the background; and after the scene with the Baccalaureus, he is not himself again until the moment when he finds himself cheated of his prey. But, if we look only at the first part, we must allow that he is one of the most daring creations in the whole range of poetry; and he gives a unity to the necessarily broken lights of the poem which, without him, would infallibly be lacking.

Second part of Faust.

The second part of *Faust* barely falls within our scope, and a summary account of it is all that can be attempted. That a continuation of some sort was necessary to the first part is obvious enough. Whether the continuation actually wrought out by Goethe is such as to satisfy the imagination is another matter. Few poems are made up of episodes so ill-assorted; few are so unequal in

their general effect. The appearance of Faust and Mephistopheles at the Emperor's court, the satire on paper money, the apparition of Helen, the war of the rival Cæsars and the general scramble for wealth in which it ends—all these are little better than a weariness; and one could wish that Goethe had never laboured at what one may suspect to have been so uncongenial a task. On the other hand, the awakening of Faust in the opening scene, his descent to the throne of the mysterious Mothers in quest of Helen, the interview between Mephistopheles and the boisterous graduate which immediately follows, and finally the whole of the last act[1]—the beneficent toil of Faust and his fatal outburst of impatience, the invasion of his palace by Care and the three sister shadows, the digging of his grave, his vain craving to stay the shadow on the dial and win a brief respite for his labours on behalf of others, his death and the dismay of the tempter when the soul he has toiled through years to win is borne upward by the angels, the welcome of Faust's spirit among the penitent and the ransomed with which the drama closes; here, if anywhere, the genius of Goethe rises to the full measure of its stature; and in the poetry of the last three centuries there is little greater.

That the second part lacks the reality of the first, that throughout — and nowhere more than in the scenes just mentioned—Goethe adopts the method of suggestion and symbolism, is no valid objection. As

[1] In its present form this seems to have been written 1825-27. But there is little doubt that there was an earlier version.

Schiller clearly saw, the way of symbolism was forced on him by the very nature of his subject.[1] The only alternative would have been to leave the subject entirely alone. And who would be pedant enough to desire so desperate a cure?

The other works of Goethe's old age—*Die Wahlverwandschaften* (1808), *Der West-östlicher Divan* (1818), the *Sprüche in Reimen und Prosa* (most of which belong to later years), lie beyond our limits. Nothing has been said of his unique autobiography;[2] nothing of his translations; nothing of his criticism.

Goethe as critic.

Of the translations, those of *Le Neveu de Rameau* (1805)—his version of this was for some time the only form in which that amazing "human document" was accessible to the public[3]—and of Cellini's Autobiography (1796-97) are the most notable, and they serve to mark the width and keenness of his sympathies. Criticism, though a lifelong interest, remained until the closing period more or less in the background. During the last dozen years of his life, however, his critical activity was enormous. In an age of literary ferment few were the writings, at any rate of the Continent, which escaped his notice. The popular poetry of the Slavs, the Spaniards, the Lithuanians, and the modern Greeks; Manzoni, Hugo, Quinet, Mérimée,

[1] Schiller's letter to Goethe of June 23, 1797.

[2] *Wahrheit und Dichtung aus meinem Leben.* The first 15 books were published 1811-14; the remainder after his death.

[3] See Goethe's statement of the circumstances, together with the letter of M. Brière, the editor of the French original (1823) in *Werke*, t. xxv., pp. 290-302.

Guizot, Cousin; nay, far beyond the limits of Europe, the poetry of the Indians, the Persians, the Chinese,—all, at least for the moment, riveted his attention; for all he had a word of welcome and of discriminating appreciation. To British writers his ear was less readily open. Of all those who made the glory of that epoch, three only—Byron, Scott, Carlyle —seem to have arrested him, and, in different ways, they were the most cosmopolitan of their race. This comparative neglect of our literature is the more strange, seeing that in earlier days he had owed so much to it, and not least to such eminently native products as *Tristram Shandy*, *Tom Jones*, and *The Vicar of Wakefield*. This exception apart, it is hardly an exaggeration to say that he followed the literary movement of the whole world. No other poet, few critics by profession, can have kept so wide or keen an outlook.

What is yet more important is the spirit in which the critic went about his work. What this was, is best shown by the following sentences in his notice of the Quarterly Reviewer's article on Manzoni's *Carmagnola* (1821): "Criticism may be either destructive or productive. The former is uncommonly easy. The critic has only to set up a standard or pattern in his own mind, and then roundly assert that the work in question does not conform to it and is consequently worthless. . . . Productive criticism is a far harder task. The question it asks is: What did the author propose to himself? is the purpose a just and reasonable one? and how far has he succeeded in carrying it

out? If these questions are answered with insight and friendliness, we have rendered a real service to the author."[1] Goethe was not the first to act upon this principle. But no previous critic had grasped it so clearly, and none had carried it out with such consistency. Through Carlyle — a somewhat reluctant channel—it has come, at least in theory, to be the accepted principle of criticism even in the land of the *Edinburgh* and *Quarterly*.

As lyric poet and dramatist.

But, with all his general services to literature and thought, it is as poet—above all, as lyric poet and dramatist—that Goethe dominates the life of his time. Here he not only opened treasures entirely new in the history of his country; he is the most commanding figure in an age which, throughout Europe, was richly endowed with poetic genius. Few poets have known so instinctively how to touch the deepest springs of thought, feeling, and experience. With few has wealth of material so completely gone hand in hand with imaginative insight or with command of all the resources of poetic utterance. In the work of his later years it was almost inevitable that these high qualities should tend to fall apart; that imagination should be overweighted at one time by technical skill, at others by the stress of reflection gathered during a lifetime. In the second part of *Faust*, perhaps in the *West-östlicher Divan*, the body of thought still remains, and, with it, the "plastic stress" which can print grace of form upon matters the most intractable. But the

[1] *Werke*, t. xxix., p. 186.

soul seems to have departed; and it is seldom that a flash comes to recall the Goethe of the youthful lyrics, of *Iphigenie*, of the earlier *Faust*. These are the works by which he is to be judged,—these, and occasional outbreaks of his former self such as startle us in *Um Mitternacht* (1821) and *Gott und Welt* (1804-1829) and passages of the second *Faust*.

Influence of Hellenism.

In one point it may be admitted that Goethe went far to open a false scent. The worship of the Greeks, which inspired some of his happiest poetry, brought an influence into German literature which was misleading to others, and at times even to himself. The stiffness, which is the fatal defect of Schiller's later dramas, may probably be traced to this source; and it is the direct cause of the aberration which induced Goethe to pour his essentially Gothic legend into the Greek mould of *Helena*. The result, as he himself jestingly complained, was a hybrid monster, the "tragelaphos" of his letters to Schiller. And it is difficult to understand how so great a poet can have plunged, with his eyes open, into such a blunder. In *Iphigenie*, which represents the fine flower of this Hellenic enthusiasm, the poet is complete master of his material. He takes the Greek form, the Greek legend, and moulds them imperiously to his own purpose. In *Helena*, form and matter are in glaring conflict; and, with all his technical skill, the author conspicuously fails to conceal the discord. And, if this was so with the master, how was it likely to

be with the disciples? It is hard not to bear a grudge against Goethe for giving a false direction to powers so original as those of Schiller and, in our own literature, of Arnold.

His relation to Romance.

What, then, is the relation of Goethe to the romantic movement? How does he stand towards its narrower and its wider aspect? In this matter, more even than most writers of his time, he was torn in two directions. His earlier works—*Götz*, and *Werther*, for instance, and the first draft of *Faust*—are purely romantic in spirit, and largely so in execution. Yet, with some reserves in the case of *Faust*, it is rather the wider than the more special qualities of romance that they reflect; its popular sympathies rather than its antiquarian leanings, its sentiment rather than its craving for the supernatural. Even with *Faust*, as we have seen, the exception is more apparent than real. And, like most of the supreme figures of his time,—with the next generation it was different,—Goethe held himself aloof from the more technical issues of the romantic movement.

And to Classicism.

As the world pressed more and more heavily upon his spirit, he turned for relief to the repose of Greek poetry and art. This tendency began to show itself some few years after his settlement at Weimar. It was confirmed by the Italian journey and the direct contact with classical sculpture and the masterpieces of the Renaissance, into which he was then brought. It is from that time that we must date the conflict

between the classical and the romantic spirit, which makes itself felt throughout the rest of his life. Sometimes, as in *Iphigenie* and *Hermann*, the two are harmonised with the happiest effect. At other times, as in the greater part of the second *Faust*, they meet but refuse to blend. Yet again, there are poems where one element triumphs to the exclusion of the other: the classical element, in the Roman Elegies; the romantic, in the finest scenes of the second *Faust*, or a stray lyric such as *Um Mitternacht*. On the whole, it must be said that, after 1786, the classical influence is the stronger of the two. And that is what Goethe himself, as critic, would have desired.[1] Who shall say whether he was right?

Schiller.

The fame of Schiller (1759-1805), hardly less bright in his own country than that of Goethe, shines with diminished lustre across the frontier. And no foreigner who accepts the more modest estimate can speak otherwise than with misgiving.

His literary life is commonly divided into three periods: I. 1781-1785; II. 1785-1794; III. 1794-1805.

I. 1781-85. It was in the Drama that Schiller first won renown; and it is on the Drama that,

[1] "Classisch ist das Gesunde, Romantisch das Kranke." *Sprüche in Prosa*, t. xiii., p. 223. It must be remembered, however, that the "romantic," which he had in his eye, was that of Tieck and the Schlegels.

in his own country, his fame still principally rests. His first play, *Die Räuber* (begun 1777, published 1781), caused a greater ferment than any work which had appeared since *Werther*. And it is easy to find the secret of its unbounded success. In substance, it may be described as an infinitely cruder *Götz*. There is the same impatience of the artificial restraints of settled society; the same belief in the patriarchal virtues of a glorified past. But the voice of Rousseau is far more defiantly heard. The indictment of "this ink-slobbering century" is infinitely more bitter. It is not to an historical past that Schiller looks for his golden age, but to the idealisations of Plutarch, the glittering vacuum of Rousseau, and the heroics of a virtuous brigand. There is a note of violence about the whole sentiment of the piece, and the characters and incidents are violent to match. The two leading figures, Karl Moor and his brother, are the stage hero and the stage villain incarnate. And the extravagance of the incidents reaches a climax in the scene, afterwards suppressed, where Karl, under threat of atrocious penalties, tears his mistress from the nunnery into which she had been thrust by his rival; or, if that be not a fair instance, in the despairing moans which rise from the dungeon where the old man had been buried alive by his son. Yet, in spite of such crudities, the play is one of unmistakable genius. The character of Karl, with all its emphasis, has a touch of true heroism. The action, exaggerated as it is, is full of movement and

Die Räuber.

effect. And, on the whole, *Die Räuber* remains the most imaginative monument of the mingled bitterness and idealism, the aspirations and the resentments, which a few years later swept the whole fabric of feudal society in France and the neighbouring countries to the ground. This is the true source of its inspiration; this is the key to the boundless applause with which it was received.

Early lyrics.

Of the two plays which immediately followed—*Fiesko* (1783) and *Kabale und Liebe* (1784)—it is impossible to speak. But, side by side with the dramatic work of this period, there is a body of lyrical poetry, some five-and-twenty pieces in all, which must be taken into account. Many of them may be lightly dismissed. They reproduce but too faithfully the most highly-charged features of the contemporary plays. The skull and cross-bones alternate with the lover's sighs and the lover's tears—his "Ach!" of despair or ecstasy—in the ever-recurring imagery of these pieces. There are two or three, however, which rise far above this depressing level and give promise, even more than is to be found in *Die Räuber*, of Schiller's future achievement. These are *Der Triumph der Liebe*, *Die Freundschaft*, and the two stanzas to the memory of Rousseau. The first is the least striking of the three; and the same theme—"'Tis love which makes the world go round"—is handled at once with deeper feeling and a firmer touch in the second. Seldom, if ever, has this thought, so dear to the men of

Schiller's generation, been more powerfully conceived and worked out than in this poem. And the closing stanza, in which the very creation of man is ascribed to an inextinguishable need of love in the breast of God, is Schiller at his best. In the lines on Rousseau, the thought is necessarily cast in a narrower mould. But the feeling is no less deep, and the imaginative form is yet more perfect. Its glowing humanity is an enduring witness to the influences which dominated his earlier life, and which, in one form or another, were with him to the close.

Second period.

II. The second period (1785-94) is comparatively poor in poetic activity. It is rather a time in which, "by labour and intense study," Schiller was preparing himself for the harvest of the future. One play only, *Don Carlos*, belongs to these years; and the lyrics hardly amount to more than a dozen pieces. On the other hand, there is a large body of prose writings—historical, critical, and general — which testify to the poet's incessant labours in self-culture and the acquirement of knowledge. In both directions, the toils of these ten years were to leave a deep mark upon his subsequent creative work.

Don Carlos.

Don Carlos (begun 1784, published 1787) is the earliest of Schiller's great dramas, and much is to be said for the opinion that it is the best. No competent judge would dream of claiming for it either the majesty or the artistic finish of *Wallenstein*. But the characters have more

life and movement than in any of the later plays; if we except *Die Braut von Messina*, the whole drama is more aflame with passion. And where these, the breath and soul of the drama, are present, we may put up with many shortcomings in less vital matters. In style, no less than in matter and dramatic treatment, *Carlos* shows a surprising advance on *Die Räuber*, not to mention the intermediate pieces. Casting aside the prose, which, according to the significant fashion of the time, he had accepted as the only natural form of dramatic speech, Schiller writes in blank verse as flexible as it is musical. But the supreme quality of the play is its mastery of dramatic motive, the genius with which the poet makes his characters not merely reveal themselves but, in the strictest sense, grow before our eyes under the stress of circumstance and action. This is the specific mark of the romantic drama; and except in the plays of Browning, which by their very excess of this quality are manifestly unfitted for representation, it is nowhere seen more clearly than in *Carlos*. The King, Posa, Carlos himself, are all shining examples of this method. Contrast them with the corresponding figures in Alfieri's *Filippo*, which was taken a few years earlier (1775-81) from the same source, the romance of Saint Réal; and though there is nothing in Schiller's play to equal the sombre effect of Filippo's settled cruelty and profound dissimulation, it will at once be evident how vast was the advantage which he drew from replacing the fixed

types of the classical by the life and warmth and growth of the romantic drama.

Advance in dramatic genius.

Schiller has often been charged with using the characters of this play, and in particular that of Posa, as the mouthpiece of his own humanitarian convictions. The accusation, however true, is not very damaging. The question is not whether the dramatist is, or is not, in agreement with the ideas or sentiments which he has put upon the lips of one personage or another, but whether his characters are truly conceived and consistently drawn, whether they are men of flesh and blood or no. That Posa has reality, though doubtless an idealised reality, it would be difficult to deny. And it may be suspected that the real ground of objection to him is that his sentiments are misliked; or, if that be thought unfair, that his critics resent the adoption of a theme, which makes appeal to such sentiments, as the central motive of a drama. Even in the milder form the criticism seems wanting in tolerance. For, unless the ideal motive interferes with the individuality of the character, there is no just ground of quarrel against the dramatist for employing it. The real weakness of *Carlos*—and it is a weakness from which Schiller's plays are rarely free—is the dazzling succession of startling, not to say sensational, incidents with which it closes. And the defence of them which is to be found in the *Briefe über Don Carlos* (1788)—a defence which on other points has much weight—can hardly be said to carry conviction. At the same time, it

must be allowed that each of these incidents, taken singly, is charged with a legitimate effect. The appearance of the Grand Inquisitor, for instance, to clench the wavering purpose of the King, is deeply and tragically impressive. It is the accumulation of such incidents that gives the reader pause.

Yet, in spite of this and other defects, the drama is full of genius. And it gives promise—a promise which, in fact, was hardly fulfilled—of still greater achievements in the future. The plot is so handled as to throw the play of conflicting interests and passions into the boldest relief. The characters stand out with startling vividness. And, through the whole action, we are brought face to face with great issues gathered in mortal struggle for the possession of men's souls.

Lyrics of this period.

From *Carlos* we turn to the poems and prose writings of the same period. The former, as has been said, are few in number; and the longest of them are translations from Virgil, significant mainly as marking the dawn of the classical influence which was destined so powerfully to mould both the form and the spirit of his later work. Apart from these we have, in the first place, two poems—*Der Kampf* and *Resignation*—which, by subject at any rate, belong rather to the earlier period. Both deal with the conflict between love and duty, which his passion for Frau von Kalb brought very close to his heart and conscience at this time. As compared, however, with *Die Freigeisterei der Leidenschaft*, an earlier poem subsequently sup-

pressed,[1] they show a striking advance in dignity of thought. The sentiment is less exaggerated, and the execution much more mature. Of the remaining poems, two stand out as splendid examples of Schiller's genius in a very different vein of lyric inspiration. They are *Die Götter Griechenlands* and *Die Künstler*.

Die Künstler.

Both these poems abound in vivid imagery. Both show the reflective strain of which Schiller was so great a master. Of the two, *Die Künstler* (1788-89) is the more important, its imagery still more abundant, its reflective genius still deeper. The subject, too, the mission of art to humanise man by visualising truth, gives fuller scope for the passionate enthusiasm which was always the surest source of Schiller's inspiration. It is true that, with all the pains bestowed in remodelling it, perhaps in consequence of them, the poem still remains obscure in several places; that the connection of thought is not always clear; in a word, that the reflective element is not completely disengaged from the philosophic mould in which it was originally cast, that it is not fused through and through by the fire of imagination. Schiller himself felt this so strongly that he excluded it—though, as he confessed, with a pang—from the collected issue of his poems. But posterity has been more lenient, and it has been right. When all deductions have been made, *Die Künstler* remains a singularly noble poem. It embodies, perhaps more completely than

[1] Or rather, edited out of all recognition into *Der Kampf*.

any other, the purer and more intellectual side of the revolutionary ideal—the ideal which, within a few weeks of its publication, was to be welcomed by the universal voice of France; which, in that purer shape, was the most fruitful influence on the thought and imaginative movement of the time; and which was welcomed with whole-hearted devotion by men so different as Wordsworth and Schiller.[1]

Prose works.

Of the prose writings of this period little is to be said, at any rate in this place. Of the more miscellaneous ones, the most important are the *Philosophische Briefe* (1786) and *Der Geisterseher* (1787-89). The former is chiefly memorable for its statement of Schiller's intellectual position, as it was before he turned to the study of Kant; and it should be mentioned that the final letter (Raphael to Julius), which points the way to that study, is from the hand of Körner, to whom the opening letters were originally addressed. The latter is a lively but extremely crude romance, merely significant as showing, on the one hand, the tendency, so strong in Schiller's early dramas and never entirely shaken off, towards plots of exaggerated intrigue; and, on the other hand, the deep suspicion against priestcraft and the Church with which, as *Carlos* testifies, the imagination of Schiller was at this time haunted.

[1] See his *Briefwechsel mit Körner*, i. 397; ii. 75. This, together with the later *Briefwechsel mit Goethe*, forms the chief authority for Schiller's inner life

The other writings are either historical or philosophical. The histories, careful as far as they go, are rather of general than of scientific interest. Schiller makes no attempt to draw upon other than already printed matter, and his style is apt to be rhetorical. With these rather serious abatements, his historical work is commonly spoken of with respect, and it undoubtedly did much to arouse an intelligent interest in historical subjects. But for us its main importance lies in its connection with his personal and literary life. *The Revolt of the Netherlands* (1788) may be described as an offshoot of *Don Carlos;* the *History of the Thirty Years' War* (1789-93) as a prelude to *Wallenstein.* The former secured him a home, with some faint approach to a subsistence, at the University of Jena; the latter was his occupation and support under the first attack (1791) of the disease which eventually proved fatal. The discipline that he wrung from these labours was of the greatest service to his intellectual growth. But intrinsically they are of far less worth than the philosophical inquiries with which he busied himself during these and the few following years (1789-95). All these, however, including his inaugural lecture on the study of universal history, are avowedly based on the speculations of Kant, and they can most suitably be treated in connection with that branch of our inquiry.

Third period.

III. 1794-1805. We pass at once to the third period of Schiller's activity—the period of his friendship with Goethe. When Schiller returned to poetry after his long silence, it was not

as dramatist but as lyric poet that he came forward. And it is on the work of the next five years (to 1799) that his fame as lyric poet principally rests. These poems may be roughly divided into two groups: the former of which, belonging mainly to 1795, gives expression to Schiller's deepest thoughts on man's life and the mission of imaginative art; while the latter, written for the most part in 1797, consists of pieces approaching more or less nearly to the ballad form.

Lyrics.

Of those which deal with the destiny of man, the most memorable are *Die Ideale*, *Licht und Wärme*, *Hoffnung*, and, though they lack the strictly lyrical form, *Der Spaziergang* and *Das verschleierte Bild zu Sais*.[1] And these are the poems which, perhaps more than any others, have won for Schiller the affection of his readers. With wonderful grace and force they paint the hopes and the trustfulness of youth, the disillusionment which is apt to come with years, the sobered hope which returns with deeper experience and brings such "calm of mind, all passions spent," as Milton found in the theme of his great tragedy.

Das Reich der Schatten.

No less notable, in some respects even more so, are the poems which embody the ideal of art that Schiller had worked out for himself during the few years immediately preced-

[1] One other must be mentioned, though it hardly comes under this head—*Die Theilung der Erde*. It is one of the most charming and pathetic fancies that ever came to a poet. Goethe pronounced it "allerliebst," and was flattered to hear that by some readers—not very discerning, it must be confessed—it was attributed to *him*. See Goethe's letter of Oct. 28, 1795, and Schiller's of Dec. 23, 1795.

ing. The most important of these is *Das Ideal und das Leben* or, as it was significantly called in the first instance, *Das Reich der Schatten*, "the realm of shadows" (1795). Schiller himself seems to have considered this the ripest fruit of his lyrical genius. And, if we are allowed to place with it one or two of the later ballads, there is no reason to dispute the judgment. A comparison between it and *Die Künstler*, which stands so close to it in subject, at once shows how great was the advance in the technical mastery of his craft which he had made in the interval. There is the same imaginative grasp of ideas, the same command of symbolism and imagery. But the two strands are now more closely interwoven. The central idea has been more clearly thought out, and is therefore fused more completely through and through by the poet's imagination. This is the greater triumph, because in itself the thought of the later poem is more elusive, more "shadowy," than that of the earlier one. Yet, in spite of all obstacles, the poet's strength never fails him, and the thought sweeps on in a procession of spontaneous imagery from beginning to end.

Revolution in Schiller's conception of poetry.

But the contrast between the two poems goes much deeper than this. And it is one which marks an entire revolution in Schiller's conception of his art. In *Die Künstler* the function of art is to interpret life, to lead man through and by the world of sense to the world of ideal truth which lies behind it. Here, on the contrary, it is to reveal an ideal world, a

"world of shadows," which lies altogether apart from the strife of action and passion; a world which man can only hope to reach, in so far as he cuts himself adrift from their importunate realities. In all this there is, doubtless, an element of truth. It is an element which came to Schiller in part from his philosophical speculations; in part through his devotion to what he conceived to be the spirit of Greek art,—to what, rightly or wrongly, he took to be the teaching of Goethe. And, if he had confined himself to saying that art can never be the same thing as reality, that in great art there is always a touch of calm which lifts it above reality, he would have said no more than is true. In fact, however, he goes far beyond this. He divorces the one region absolutely from the other; he forbids poetry to concern itself with flesh and blood; he banishes it to a world of shadows.

Not to be carried out consistently.

No genius and no strength of will could carry out such a theory with rigorous consistency. And, with his passionate nature and his love of effect, Schiller was perhaps less likely than most men to succeed in the attempt. But as an ideal the theory remained with him to the end, and its influence can be clearly traced upon much of his subsequent work,—upon *Die Braut von Messina* and one or two of the Greek lyrics in particular. In *Die Klage der Ceres,* for instance, which is perhaps the most perfect of those lyrics,[1] he may fairly claim

[1] The one most closely approaching to it in spirit is *Das Eleusische Fest.*

to have gone far to satisfy his own rigid requirements. Here the bounds of life and death seem almost to melt away at the mother's lament, and the corn, as it strikes root downward and bears fruit upward, weaves with the return of each year a fresh bond between the living and the dead. Yet even here the triumph of the theory is more apparent than real, and the abiding charm of the poem, which it is not easy to exaggerate, lies in its appeal to the deepest and most universal instincts of humanity.[1]

In other poems of the period the doctrine of shadows is forgotten. And this is hardly less true of the Greek lyrics than of the ballads cast in a mediæval setting. Thus *Die Kraniche des Ibykus* has to some critics seemed too obvious in its motive and too melodramatic in its treatment. The criticism is hardly just. But at least it serves to show how impossible it was for Schiller to move persistently in the rarefied ether of his own theory, and how ready he was, when occasion offered, to exchange it for the grosser atmosphere which other poets are commonly content to breathe. By a curious irony, the greatest of Greek poets and the high-priest of modern Hellenism may be called consenting parties to his apostasy.

Die Kraniche.

[1] The nearest approach to the classicism of Schiller is perhaps to be found in the poems of Hölderlin (1770-1843), otherwise known as the author of *Hyperion* (1797), a romance of which the scene is cast in modern Greece, and as the friend of Hegel. His earlier pieces (*Das Schicksal*, *Griechenland*, &c.) were published in *Thalia* and other Miscellanies edited by Schiller (1794-96), and are clearly inspired by *Die Götter Griechenlands* and other poems by Schiller. The last forty years of his life were spent in confinement.

For the chant of the Eumenides, which forms the crisis of the story, was taken almost word for word from Humboldt's translation of Æschylus; and more than one of the most vivid phrases and incidents of the poem were suggested by Goethe.

Naturally, however, it is in the mediæval ballads that the happy inconsequence of Schiller in this matter is seen most plainly. The crown of these, there can be little doubt, is *Der Taucher* (1797).[1] And here Schiller throws all theories, all Greek memories, to the winds; he surrenders himself heart and soul to the romantic impulse which lay at the core of his poetic nature. The horror of the whirlpool seething beneath the cliff, the brave plunge of the boy after the goblet which the king hurls into it, the hushed thrill of the onlookers as they watch for the back-rush of the waters, the first glimpse of the white arm holding the cup aloft, the boy's recital of the ghastly wonders he had seen below, the second throwing of the cup and the second plunge of the undaunted youth, this time with no return, —these are the incidents of one of the most glowing romances, and assuredly the least shadowy, that was ever written; and Schiller handles them with the exulting and abounding mastery of the born romantic. The one blot on the poem is the incredible levity of the king in inciting the boy to the second plunge. It is as though Schiller had forgotten that even romance has its laws of probability and fitness, and that they

Der Taucher.

[1] The chief others are *Der Gang nach dem Eisenhammer* and *Der Kampf mit dem Drachen.*

cannot be overridden with impunity. Once more, he was here carried away by his love of effect. But if that be a defect on any showing, is it not doubly so on the theory of shadows?

Ballads of Schiller and Goethe compared.

A comparison between the ballads of Schiller and Goethe is hardly to be avoided. The methods of the two men are very different. So are the subjects they best love to choose. Schiller no doubt commonly comes nearer to the traditional form and manner of the ballad. Certainly incident plays a much larger part with him than it does with Goethe. *Die Kraniche, Der Gang nach dem Eisenhammer,* and *Der Taucher* are all ballads of incident, and they by no means exhaust the list. It would be hard to mention a single ballad by Goethe of which the same thing could be said with the same truth. Goethe seldom, if ever, contents himself with pure incident. He eschews the description and the direct moral appeal, in which Schiller excels. But he has the secret of atmosphere, the power of wakening the emotion appropriate to his subject by indefinable suggestion, to a degree which has seldom been rivalled, and of which the more boisterous touch of Schiller is entirely innocent. This is most clearly seen by the manner in which each approaches the theme of terror. Of the darker forms of terror Schiller is a master — the horror of nature in *Der Taucher;* the horror of a sudden remorse in *Die Kraniche.* With Goethe, on the other hand, even the less poignant forms of terror fade into the background. Terror may enter into *Die Braut von Korinth*

—the terror of the supernatural. But it enters merely as an element, and it is overshadowed by the other emotions—love, rapture, despair, indignation—which he drew from the essentially tragic subject. More commonly, however, it is not the terror of the supernatural, but the vague apprehension, the subtle fascination of it, that he renders. This is so in particular with *Erlkönig* and *Der Fischer*. The latter naturally suggests a comparison with *Der Taucher*. The subject of both is in some sense the same—the relentless might of the waters. But what Schiller sees is their peril and their horror. Goethe thinks only of the spell by which they draw man, as of his own will, to destruction.

On the whole, it may be said that Goethe's ballads are at once simpler and more ideal—that they strike a deeper note and are far richer in suggestion than those of Schiller. Compare, for instance, *Der Taucher* with *Der König in Thule*. The incident which forms the germ of each poem is the same—the throwing of the goblet. To Schiller this calls up a glowing vision of unknown terrors and romantic daring. To Goethe it stands for the set resolve of the love which triumphs over death. Each poem is a masterpiece in its kind. But can it be doubted that Goethe's is the rarer and the higher?

Die Glocke.

The one poem which it remains to mention is the well-known *Lied von der Glocke* (1799), a poem hardly less popular in its own country than Gray's *Elegy* is in ours, and for much the same reasons. Thanks to the genius with which Schiller

chooses his symbol, the casting of the bell, the theme, which might readily have seemed tedious and vapid, becomes full of stir and vividness; and the familiar tale of the joys and sorrows, the cloud and sunshine, which await man from the cradle to the grave, is mingled at every turn with the eager toil of the work-shop and the clang of the hammer and the guiding call of the master-workman's voice. This was the last lyric of importance written by Schiller, and it was performed, as was fitting, at the solemn commemoration held under Goethe's direction shortly after his death.

Later dramas.

The last seven or eight years of Schiller's life were given almost entirely to the Drama. *Wallenstein*, which had been on the stocks since 1796, was first performed in 1799. *Maria Stuart* followed in 1800, *Die Jungfrau von Orleans* in 1801, *Die Braut von Messina* in 1803, *Wilhelm Tell* in 1804, about a year before his death. Of these, *Wallenstein* and *Die Braut von Messina* are the most typical of his genius.

Wallenstein.

Twelve years separated *Wallenstein*[1] from *Don Carlos*, and in the interval Schiller had entirely changed his dramatic methods. *Wallenstein* has neither the same kind of defects nor the same kind of merit that is to be found in the earlier play. The restlessness of *Carlos*, the excessive accumulation of incident, the tendency to over-idealisation of character — all these are gone.

[1] *Wallenstein's Lager*, *Wallenstein* and *Die Piccolomini* are here treated as one play.

But so also are the warmth and glow, the close grip of character, the power of presenting character as shaping itself to fresh issues with each turn of the action. In a word, we have passed at one stroke from the romantic to the classical model. Appearances in this instance may easily deceive. The historical subject of the play, its great if not inordinate length—which, even without the Prologue (*Wallenstein's Lager*), is considerably more than that of *Carlos*, itself one of the longest plays on record,—the large space allotted in the closing acts to the loves of Max and Thekla: these, no doubt, are rather in the vein of romance than of the classical tradition. But when allowance has been made for all these things, it remains true that the dominant impression left by the play is the reverse of romantic. The characters, vigorously as they are drawn, lack the fulness and the warmth of romantic tragedy; the language and rhythm, if more stately, are also stiffer and less flexible than those of *Carlos*. Everything, as Schiller himself says, is subordinated to the simplification and unity of the plot. The other "unities," though not observed to the letter, are violated but slightly and with obvious compunction. And the slaughter of the tenth act, though plentiful enough to appal the stoutest heart, is conducted entirely behind the scenes.

That all this is due to Schiller's new-born ardour for the spirit and methods of Greek poetry would be sufficiently clear, even if the evidence of his own letters and contemporary lyrics were wanting. Whether the classical model was altogether suited to the subject he

had chosen, or again, which is yet more important, whether it was enough in harmony with his own natural instincts, is another matter. There is much ground for the conclusion that, in departing from his earlier manner, Schiller did violence both to his subject and himself; and the immense effort that it cost him has left its mark but too plainly on the constraint and the very magnificence of his style. The influence of Goethe and, still more, the example of *Iphigenie*, were in fact misleading. And the fusion of classical and romantic which the elder poet had accomplished by a divine chance in that masterpiece was beyond the reach of any genius less potent and less steeped in the instincts of poetry than his.

But when all this has been said, *Wallenstein* remains a most impressive drama. And if we consider how intractable the material was, we can only marvel at the genius which drew from it so striking a result. Of all dramas that claim to be historical, it is perhaps the only one of modern times which completely justifies the title. Apart from the episode of the lovers—which, at least in the closing scenes, is too manifestly an episode—Schiller confines himself rigorously to the historical matter, and by the sheer force of genius he succeeds in fusing it through and through with dramatic fire. After the Prologue—in itself a dramatic masterpiece which paints the army of fortune collected round the standard of Wallenstein—the action sweeps on without a pause from the first scene to the last. We are made not merely to see but to feel the storm first gathering, then breaking with irresistible force upon the

head of the aspiring traitor. The sense of impending doom deepens from act to act, and the tragic horror of the close is indescribable. Yet even here the weakness, as well as the strength, of Schiller makes itself felt. Throughout he is rather the master of great scenic effects than the dramatist who controls the deepest springs of human character and sympathy. Max excepted, no one of the personages has a touch of the heroism without which tragedy in the highest sense is impossible. The rest, from Wallenstein downwards, are a viper's nest of treachery. And once released from the spell which Schiller has cast over his imagination, the spectator is apt to be haunted by a sense of hollowness.

Die Braut von Messina.

In *Die Braut von Messina* Schiller breaks entirely fresh ground; though here, too, the inevitable contrast between the romantic groundwork of his genius and the classical superstructure is apparent. In outward form it is the most purely classical of all his dramas. It is so in the small number of the personages — four alone sustain the whole action of the play. It is so in the simplicity of the plot, in the revival of the chorus, in the declaration of war on "naturalism" and all its works, which Schiller issues in an elaborate preface. On the other hand, the theme of the play, the passionate love of two brothers for the same woman, is clearly romantic rather than classical; it is surrounded with many accessories of romantic circumstance; and it is set forth with all the fire and glow of the romantic temper. In all these points, as well as in the constant

employment of the rhymed stanza, it is difficult not to believe that Schiller, unconsciously perhaps, was influenced rather by Calderon — who first became known to the Weimar circle in the year when he was at work upon *Die Braut* (1802)[1]—than by the Greeks. Certainly the whole atmosphere of the piece recalls that of the Castilian dramatist. And this is a timely reminder that, in their most perfect examples, the classical and the romantic drama, with all their differences, have yet many points of contact. It is with the pseudo-classical spirit that the romantic instinct, in each of its many forms, is irreconcilably at war.

In this play, assuredly, the two strains mingle without the slightest appearance of constraint. Never had Schiller conceived his action so simply; never had he lit it up with such a flame of passion, or found such lyric fervour of language to ennoble it. The one blot on the drama is the chorus in which, with a poet's perversity, he took such immeasurable pride. It was designed to idealise the action. Its effect on the mind of most readers will be the very reverse. To find an equivalent—if a remote equivalent—for the chorus of Greek tragedy is not impossible, as Goethe had shown in *Iphigenie*, as Manzoni was to show in *Carmagnola* and *Adelchi*. To transplant it directly

[1] See Goethe's *Annalen*, year 1802. Wilhelm Schlegel's translation of selected plays by Calderon did not appear till the following year. But it was known to Goethe and Schiller by 1802 (*Gespräche*, i. 241-3 : Oct. 1802) ; and Friedrich Schlegel's *Alarcos*, a play stamped with Calderon's influence from beginning to end, was performed under their direction in that year ; while Tieck's *Genoveva*, the first symptom of the cult of Calderon, had appeared in 1800.

into the modern drama, even in the modified form adopted by Schiller, is a hopeless task. For the reader, however, if not for the spectator, this is a defect which it is happily easy to overlook. And, on the whole, *Die Braut von Messina* must be reckoned as the most faultless — and, side by side with *Don Carlos*, as the most powerful and original—of Schiller's plays.

Contrasted with Carlos.

Nothing could well be greater than the contrast between these two masterpieces. *Carlos* is manifestly immature; but it gives promise, and something more than promise, of the two qualities most essential to dramatic genius,—a profound knowledge of the springs of action, and an inborn faculty for transmuting the great issues of human action and passion into poetry. In *Die Braut von Messina* the latter element has won undisputed mastery; the former is held under rigorous control. The drama, to Schiller, is no longer the mirror of life, but a cloud-picture recalling it in more shadowy outline,—in richer, but more evanescent, colours. The figures on his ideal stage are still of like passions with ourselves, but they move behind a half-transparent veil, and the voices that reach us are as the voices of a dream. The close grip of the poet on the realities of life is lost, or rather deliberately surrendered. The admonitions of *Das Ideal und das Leben* are here worked out upon the stage. We are transported by the magic wand of the poet to the "realm of shadows." That Schiller attained the end he sought is beyond dispute. But is it certain that

it was as well worth striving for as that which he forsook?

A word must be added about *Wilhelm Tell*, not so much on account of its intrinsic beauty as for the light it throws on the sympathies, and still more on the influence, of the author. It may be true, as has been said,[1] that Schiller was not primarily drawn to the subject by his old passion for freedom. The patriarchal cast which he gives to the action and characters, the substitution of local for cosmopolitan ideals, make it unlikely that he was so. Yet it is hard to believe that the patriotic impulse was altogether absent from his mind; and the same applies to the *Jungfrau von Orleans*. In any case, there can be no doubt that the choice of such a theme for two of his latest dramas greatly endeared him to the men of the Liberation War and the subsequent struggle for political liberty. It is this, and the direct appeal of his simpler lyrics, that won the hearts of his countrymen. Before the subtleties of *Die Braut von Messina* and *Das Reich der Schatten* they would have remained cold.

In taking leave of Schiller, it is hard to resist the impression that he himself was greater than anything he achieved. His genius was late in ripening; and, when it did ripen, was under influences which turned it from the natural direction of its growth. His ear for the music of poetry was never of the keenest; and,

[1] By Hettner, in *Die Romantische Schule, in ihrem inneren Zusammenhang mit Goethe und Schiller* — a most penetrating piece of criticism.

though in his greater plays he shows a high, sometimes a consummate, mastery of the statelier cadences of blank verse, his lyric melody is seldom entirely satisfying. But on all his poetry there is stamped the impress of a great nature; "eternal youth," to paraphrase the noble tribute of Goethe,[1] "for ever striving towards the ideal himself and for ever struggling to embody it in his creations, a nature which nothing common or trivial could even approach—

> Und hinter ihm, in wesenlosen Scheine,
> Lag, was uns alle bändigt, das Gemeine."

The Romantic School.

With Schiller and Goethe the glory goes out of German literature. The giants are followed by the pigmies. In spite of this, it was to an astonishing degree an age of literary ferment. The misfortune is that the vintage was not richer and the wine not of a stronger body. The centre of this ferment lies in the work of what may conveniently, though loosely, be called the romantic school. And the leading figures of that school—nor in this account is it possible to go beyond the leading figures—are the two Schlegels, Tieck, Werner, Richter, and Novalis.

Its characteristics.

The first three of these are so closely connected in their personal history, they have so many characteristics in common, that it is natural to speak of them together. The temper of the two former, no doubt, is more distinctly critical; that of

[1] See *Epilog zu Schiller's Glocke*, spoken at the commemoration of August 10, 1805. *Werke*, t. xv., p. 360. See *Gespräche*, ii. 12,

the last, productive and imaginative. But the aims with which all worked are fundamentally the same; and in their influence they are not to be dissevered. Love of paradox and straining after effect, these are the first things to strike us in the vast body of work which they turned out of their factory. And when all allowance has been made for the great services which they rendered in the field of criticism, and still more of translation, this is the prevalent impression left at the close. Seldom has effect been sought so undisguisedly; seldom has there been such indifference as to the choice of means. If the elder Schlegel brings out a classical drama adapted from the *Ion* of Euripides, the younger replies with a violently romantic tragedy drawn from a Spanish legend a few months later. And Tieck had paved the way for the latter in a drama still more choked with romantic machinery a few years before. In Wilhelm Schlegel's poems, ballads on Pygmalion and Arion alternate with "fantasies" on the burial of the Brahmin and sonnets or "romances" full of forced unction in honour of the Virgin. In Tieck, tales elaborated on the model of the Arabian Nights, with a strong dash of *Vathek*, are succeeded by full-blown novels, painting the quest of culture after the fashion of *Wilhelm Meister*, or mingling the sentimental crudities of the Minerva Press with the intrigue and marvels of the *Geisterseher*. Is it strange that we should be left with a sense of mystification? or be unable to quench the suspicion that the piquant setting, the timely shifting of the scenes, was the first object of these

writers; the poetic worth of the theme, the dramatic truth of the characters, an altogether secondary consideration? To put the matter in a more charitable light, the German romanticists started from the assumption that the true function of poetry, like that of music, is to give utterance to the vaguer feelings and yearnings of the imagination, to render moods rather than the realities and concrete passions of life. They forgot that, for this purpose, words are an instrument immeasurably inferior to musical sound. They forgot also that the symbolic method, on which they were inevitably driven, is a dangerous weapon; that, in any sustained work of poetry, it is almost impossible to find symbols which shall suggest precisely the mood of the writer and nothing more; and that the artless inventions of mediæval piety—in their first intention, nothing less than symbolic—were the very worst symbols in the world for the alembicated sentiments which they were arbitrarily taken to represent.

Their most fruitful work, as has been said, lies in criticism and translation; and it is with these that we begin. In criticism, it is with the Schlegels alone (Wilhelm, 1767-1845; Friedrich, 1772-1829) that we have to deal;[1] and of the two, though the name of the elder is the more familiar in this country, it is clear that the younger was both the more learned and the more original. His critical work is of two kinds.

Criticism: Friedrich Schlegel.

[1] The greater part of Tieck's critical work belongs to his later years (1819 onwards).

In the first, he discharges the current duties of his office, reviewing the books of the day, estimating the literary tendencies of the hour, preaching the gospel of romanticism, and interspersing it with paradoxes—"Christianity is universal cynicism"[1]—carefully calculated to bewilder the public and to jostle its most cherished convictions. This is the weaker side of his achievement, and it met a well-merited chastisement in *Der hyperboräische Esel* of Kotzebue (1800). But even here we can trace a serious, if a somewhat perverted, purpose; and we not seldom light on hints—such as his exaltation of the Pre-Raphaelites or the saying that "the science of Poetry is its history"—which were destined to bear fruit at a later time. Much of his work in this kind is contained in the *Athenäum* (1798-1800) and in *Europa* (1803), the latter founded during his residence in Paris. Far more significant was the outcome of his serious studies. In his *Geschichte der griechischen Poesie* (begun 1794), followed by a continuation on the poetry of classical antiquity as a whole (1798) and by a *Geschichte der alten und neuen Litteratur* (1812), he may fairly claim to have led the way to the rational study of literary history as distinguished from literary antiquities, on the one hand, and the review of current literature upon the other. The attempt, no doubt, is imperfect, and it presents many gaps. But it comes nearer to the

[1] It is fair to say that the sentence is put hypothetically: "If the essence of Cynicism consists in putting nature before art, goodness before beauty and science, . . . then Christianity . . ."—*Athenäum*, i. 6.

realisation of what has since become a widely accepted idea than any previous writing—for instance, Warton's *History of English Poetry*, or even the suggestive sketches of Herder—can be said to have done. And in this path he was subsequently followed by his brother.

His Indian studies.

Yet more important are his studies in Indian poetry, *Sprache und Weisheit der Indier* (1808). This forms nothing short of an epoch in the history of European learning, and even of letters and philosophy. Schlegel, again acting upon the hint of Herder, was the first to recognise the full value of the treasures recently (1784-94) laid open by Sir William Jones. His work may have been inspired by that distrust of "rationalism" which, in the very year of its publication, brought about his conversion to Catholicism. But, whatever the writer's motive, Europe stood to gain by the revelation of a thought and poetry so remote from her own. And from that day to this she has been haunted by the image of the "brooding East," with its immemorial wisdom and its inveterate mood of contemplation, so fascinating yet so incomprehensible to the "victorious West." In this, the literary side of his enterprise, Schlegel had to some extent been anticipated by Herder; and he was followed, though at a long distance, by his brother some ten years later.[1] We may further note his influence upon the

[1] The *Indische Bibliothek* was founded by W. Schlegel in 1819; the *Hitopadesa*—in which, however, the best part of the work is said to have been done by his collaborator, Lassen—was published 1829-31.

later and, it must be admitted, less valuable developments of the philosophy of Schelling, through whom, in all probability, the eastern strain has passed into the common stock of European thought. But there is another side of his labours which it would be unjust to overlook. He founded the study, not only of Hindoo literature, but of the Sanscrit language, upon the Continent, and but for him, the achievements of Wilhelm v. Humboldt, Grimm, and Bopp—and, with them, the triumphs of comparative philology—might have been long delayed.[1]

Wilhelm Schlegel.

On Wilhelm Schlegel there is less need to linger. His chief importance, as critic, is to have been the recognised—though, by his own admission, not very sincere—leader of the romantic school, and, in that capacity, to have directed a long, and often a bitter, war against the established celebrities of German poetry—Klopstock, Wieland, Lessing, Voss—and, above all, Schiller, whom he treated with such affectation of contempt that even Friedrich was constrained to protest.[2] Goethe was perhaps the one writer, not of his own following, whom he consistently exalted. And great was the fluttering of the dovecots when the Olympian, provoked beyond endurance by what he regarded as the narrowness of their political, religious, and literary creed, vehemently repudiated

[1] Humboldt's chief works in this field appeared 1820-30; Bopp's *Lehrgebaüde der Sanskritsprache*, 1827; *Vergleichende Grammatik*, 1833-49. Jakob Grimm's *Deutsche Grammatik* was published in 1819; but his labours in Indo-European philology come later.

[2] See letter of Friedrich to Wilhelm Schlegel of Jan. 15, 1798 (*Briefe*, i. 347).

the romantics and all their works (1817).[1] Apart from his place as official leader of the school,—and, it must be added, from some of his work on Shakespeare,—it is difficult to take the elder Schlegel quite seriously as critic. His judgments are commonly superficial, and too often perverse. This may best be illustrated from the most popular of his writings, the *Dramatische Vorlesungen* (1808). Here was a subject which he had made peculiarly his own; and by his treatment of it he may fairly be judged. Without pressing too hard, as perhaps Goethe did, on his depreciation of Euripides, though this came with a strangely ill grace from the author of *Ion*, no reader can fail to observe his coldness towards Racine, still less his laboured endeavours to belittle Molière. His handling of the Spanish Drama affords a yet more crucial instance of his barrenness. Calderon had been the stalking-horse of the brotherhood; the translation of his selected plays by Schlegel himself, one of the chief moves in the romantic game. Yet nothing could be more empty than the account given of him in the lectures; only in one paragraph does the critic venture

[1] Through the mouth of Heinrich Meyer in *Kunst und Alterthum*. The article, *Die neu-deutsche religiös-patriotische Kunst*, notoriously expressed the mind of Goethe. It was, as the title indicates, an attack on the mediæval tendencies of current German Art. But these corruptions are traced to the influence of the romantics—Tieck, Wilhelm, and, above all, Friedrich Schlegel. The article is included in the Weimar edition of Goethe's *Werke*, t. xlix. (1), pp. 23-59. A reflection of Goethe's wrath against the Schlegels, and, in a less degree, against Schelling, appears indirectly in the *West-östlicher Divan*, directly in the *Sprüche in Reimen*, "Nicht jeder kann alles ertragen," and the following pieces.

within speaking distance of the poet. In spite of these defects, however, it would be unjust not to acknowledge that the design of the *Lectures* is strikingly original. It was the earliest attempt to view the Drama as a whole, to trace its gradual development from the rude beginnings of the earlier plays of Æschylus, or even of the Hindoos, to the subtlest creations of Calderon or Shakespeare. In this conception, at any rate, he was following worthily in the footsteps of his brother.

Translations: Shakespeare.

In translation, a yet more potent instrument than criticism for the romantic campaign, the elder Schlegel asserts his supremacy; and here he is closely associated with Tieck. Their most important translations are those of Shakespeare, Calderon, and *Don Quixote:* the first by both writers in friendly rivalry (1797-1833); the second by Schlegel (1803-9); the third by Tieck (1799). On the supreme merit of these translations—in particular of Schlegel's Shakespeare[1]—all competent judges are agreed. But what it here concerns us to note is that each presents a different aspect of the romantic movement. In the case of Shakespeare, this is best seen by a comparison with the earlier translations (Wieland, Eschenburg, 1762-84) on the one hand, and Schiller's adaptation of *Macbeth* (1800) on the other. The former, in obedience to a significant tradition,

[1] See a striking estimate of it in Brandes' *Hauptströmungen* (German translation, t. ii., pp. 61-64). Schlegel translated seventeen of the plays; the remainder were mainly adapted by Tieck from earlier translations. It is generally admitted that Schlegel's part is greatly superior to the rest.

are in prose, and accentuate the purely dramatic and observant side of Shakespeare's genius. The latter is in verse, and of set purpose strikes out all the harsher and, as Schiller would have said, the coarser elements of the original, all that savours too closely of the soil, replacing them by idealisms which no English reader can contemplate with patience. The "rump-fed ronion" is banished; the witches, washed and combed, are transformed into graceful girls;[1] the Porter is a converted sinner who sings a morning hymn while Duncan is murdered within. Tieck and Schlegel steer clear of both these extremes. They preserve the poetry of the great dramatist; but they preserve also his delight in all sides of human nature, all that makes him the resonant echo of the England of Elizabeth. This was the healthy strain—an enemy might say, the lucid interval — in the romantic enthusiasm. And it contrasts altogether favourably with the insipid refinements of the classical Schiller.

In the other two cases it is not the treatment but the choice of subject that calls for comment.

Calderon.

What drew Schlegel to the translation of Calderon, it cannot be doubted, was precisely that which would have made most men hesitate to undertake it; the remoteness of the poet from modern thought and the temper of northern Europe, his fantastic genius, his absorption in the creed of Catholic Christendom. As if to put the matter beyond doubt, the play selected to open the

[1] In this particular freak Goethe would seem to have been an accomplice, if not the chief offender. See *Gespräche*, i. 275.

series was *La Devocion de la Cruz*,—the very play which is most calculated to shock modern preconceptions, and which, in truth, is least defensible on dramatic grounds. Having induced his readers at the first gulp to swallow the camel, he justly reckoned that they would not strain at the gnats which he had in store. He had his reward. For the next five-and-twenty years the influence of Calderon on the drama and poetry of Germany is hardly to be overrated; and, without prejudice to the rare intensity of his genius, it was by no means for the good. Neither in form nor substance can the Spanish Drama ever be more than an exotic in northern Europe; and it was as an exotic—an exotic to be naturalised at all costs—that Schlegel and his disciples cherished it with such devotion. To admire it, and to teach men so, was one thing. To hold it up, both by precept and example, as a model for imitation, was quite another.

Don Quixote.

With *Don Quixote*, no doubt, we stand on firmer ground. There is no country in Europe where, in the truest sense, it has not found a home. The one thing to give us pause is the motive of which Tieck may reasonably be suspected in his choice. In the masterpiece of Cervantes he believed himself to have found a model of the "irony" which he had persuaded himself to regard as the soul of poetry. The theory of irony is hardly likely, at this time of day, to enlist supporters. What is more, the application of it to *Don Quixote* is a grave injustice. It is not the absurdity, but the nobility and pathos, of his hero that Cervantes has at heart.

And to treat his romance as an understudy of *Sir Thopas* is entirely to misread it. Nothing could better illustrate the unsoundness of the ironic theory.

We turn to the creative work of the three writers; and here the Schlegels are completely thrown into the shade by their disciple. The *Ion* of the elder brother (1802), the *Lucinde* and *Alarcos* of the younger (1799, 1802), these are the only imaginative works from their hand of which even the ghost can still be said to walk the earth. *Lucinde* had a "success of scandal," which its friends mistook for a badge of immortality. It may be described as a series of variations on the "Freigeisterei der Leidenschaft"; or as what *Mademoiselle de Maupin* might have been, had it *per impossibile* been written by a professor. The laboured pedantry of the performance was overlooked in its impertinence,[1] and the school broke out into jubilations over the rout of prejudice and respectability. Oddly enough, none was louder in praise than Schleiermacher, the chaplain of the school, as Schelling was its philosopher. His *Vertraute Briefe über Lucinde* were composed to the honour and glory of the new evangel. At the close of his life Schlegel, with some hesitancy, confessed to shame at the offences of his youth; and *Lucinde*, which indeed never reached beyond its first volume, was excluded from his collected works. It is now read only by the literary antiquarian.

Lucinde.

If *Lucinde* gives us the sentimentalism of Romance,

[1] Not, however, by Kotzebue, who pillories both absurdities impartially in *Der hyperboräische Esel.*

Alarcos and *Ion* embody its mania for innovations of form. Produced within a few months of each other on the Weimar stage, they present, as probably they were intended to do, a glaring contrast. *Ion* is adapted, with considerable skill but entire loss of poetic charm, from the well-known drama of Euripides; and it is not uncharitable to suppose that the choice was largely determined by a desire to follow up the blow struck by *Lucinde* against the respectabilities. If so, the aim was accomplished. Much to Goethe's wrath, the audience openly revolted against the free manners of the Greek gods. Against *Alarcos* no such complaint could be brought. The theme of the piece is aggressively Christian, and the heroine neither demands nor obtains from Heaven anything more compromising than vengeance. Here, however, the merits of the performance end. The handling of the action and characters is feeble. The whole strength of the poet is lavished on the form. Terza rima, ottava rima, sonnets, assonanced dialogue, are mingled, as with Calderon, in bewildering profusion. The one thing lacking is the fire and passion of the master.[1]

Ion and Alarcos.

If the Schlegels were barren in creative work, Tieck (1773-1853) was, at least in certain periods of his long life, extraordinarily productive. Facility was, in fact, his besetting sin; and it exposed him to the still more fatal defect which he shared with other members of his school, an entire indifference to the choice of

Tieck.

[1] It was received with shouts of laughter.—*Gespräche*, i. 234.

theme. We confine ourselves to his earlier achievement (1792-1808), and treat it without strict regard to chronological order.

Zerbino.

The drama is the field in which he touches his fellow romanticists the most closely, and it is with this that we begin. The most important of his dramatic pieces are *Prinz Zerbino* (1799), *Genoveva* (1799, first performed 1800), and *Kaiser Octavianus* (1804). Of all his works, *Zerbino* —"a journey in search of taste"—is perhaps the most brilliant; giving free scope, as it does, not only to the fantasy, which appears more or less in all he wrote, but also to the wit which, by the nature of the case, was excluded from his more serious efforts, but which was undoubtedly one of his most notable gifts. It is a glancing satire on courts and kings; still more on the literary fashions and critical dogmas of the "enlightenment." This, it must be confessed, is the weak point of the design. Writing when the triumph of Goethe and Schiller was at its height, Tieck takes up the quarrel of the *Xenien* and surrenders himself to the cheap amusement of pursuing a feud already decided beyond hope of appeal—a feud, moreover, which, even in the first instance, had reflected little credit on either of the parties. With this abatement, the satire is sparkling enough. But, as is usual with Tieck, it is spun out to immeasurable length; and the mixture of sentiment, the incessant love-warblings, the eternal blue flowers and golden heavens, are more than usually out of place.

Genoveva is a far more questionable venture, but it is no less characteristic of the author. In form, the play is hardly less variegated than *Alarcos;* and the variations are drawn from the same source, with even less of apparent effort. In this respect *Genoveva* makes a landmark in the history of the romantic movement. It is the starting-point of the vast influence wielded by Calderon—an influence which, as we have seen, made itself felt far beyond the borders of the school; on at least one of Schiller's plays, and on the last act of the masterpiece of Goethe. Tieck, however, was not the man to content himself with mere manipulations of form—in which, indeed, Wilhelm Schlegel hints that he was but moderately proficient. The matter of the play is no less revolutionary than its manner. Always on the watch for new scenery, this time Tieck casts boldly back to the dark ages and centres his action round the battle of Tours. The Moorish and Christian camps, the battlefield, the beleaguered city, the feudal castle, all form part of the stage carpentry. And Saint Boniface—who opens the play with the bluff announcement, "I am the stalwart Bonifacius," and closes it with "Ora pro nobis, Sancta Genoveva"—is just as much a piece of stage property as the rest. The central figure, it will have been seen, is none other than Saint Geneviève, whose trials, long-suffering, and miraculous deliverance, not even excepting the wild doe who gives suck to her infant, are brought bodily upon the scene, with every accessory likely to draw tears from the spec-

Genoveva.

tator. The legend is among the finest creations of mediæval piety. But to dramatise it, to trick it out with the tinsel and limelights of the stage, is nothing short of a desecration. A rage for effect is the ruling passion of the whole piece. To this all dramatic truth, to say nothing of all genuine reverence, is sacrificed from beginning to end. Witness, on the one hand, the persistent use of the religious motive to revive the flagging interest of the audience. Witness, on the other, the impossible forbearance, not to say encouragement, shown by the saintly heroine towards her ruffianly lover: apparently with the sole object of allowing the author to play off his master-stroke, a love-and-flower scene, twice instead of once.

Much the same faults are apparent in *Octavianus*, some of them in a yet grosser form. The plot is a repetition of *Genoveva*, or rather of *Genoveva* grafted upon the Tale of the Man of Law, with a slip of *Winter's Tale*, terribly mangled in the process, laboriously inserted. The outraged wife, the wanderings in the forest, the benevolent wild beast,—this time an ape and a lioness divide the honours which in the previous play were monopolised by the doe,—all reappear among the ingredients of the piece. The author, however, was far too skilful a stage-manager to content himself with a mere replica of his earlier effects. We are transported to the Holy Land, we are plunged into the midst of a holy and highly romantic war. An unknown stripling fights single-handed against a Paynim giant, and hews him

Octavianus.

in pieces before the Lord. The Sultan's daughter incontinently does her duty by falling in love with the Christian hero, and, after the most approved pattern of romantic "ingénues," becomes an ardent convert to his faith,—improving, however, upon her model by subsequently working conversion on her father. The "historical" background, again, is of the gayest. A fierce battle against the Mussulmans is fought under the walls of Paris in the days of Dagobert. The allies of the French king are Rodrigo King of Spain—Roderick the Visigoth is presumably intended,—Baldwin of Jerusalem, the Emperor Octavian, and Edward King of England: a larger company of crowned heads, if we reckon the companion potentates of the opposite side, than has ever met before or since save in the coffee-house of *Candide*. We are, in fact, in the full tide of mediæval adventure; we have all the absurdities of the *Sowdone of Babylon* without its naïveté and without its simplicity. And here we come to the glaring incongruities of Tieck's method. This childish story is presented with all the elaborations of the most alembicated art. Ottava rima, sonnets, assonanced octosyllables—all the splendours of Calderon—are scattered about the play in unstinted measure and the most impossible connection. They burst out in the breathing-space of a duel. They spring from the lips of the comic characters who, even without this, are sufficiently out of keeping with the tone of the whole drama. If we imagine Launce or Lancelot breaking forth into Spenserian stanza or Petrarchian

sonnet, we can frame some notion of the absurdities here committed by Tieck. And this is the play which was hailed as the crowning glory of the romantic triumph. It would, however, be unjust not to add that among these lyric utterances are to be found the finest passages of the drama, and that some of them—for instance, the songs of Lealia and Roxana in praise of the lily and the rose—are not altogether unworthy of the Spanish poet by whom they were inspired.

The romantic theory of poetry.

What is the ideal, we ask, which lies behind this strange medley of calculated effects? In the last resort it may be considered as a distortion of the ideal proclaimed by Schiller and, in a far less exaggerated form, by Goethe, the ideal of *Das Reich der Schatten*. The matter of poetry, both Goethe and Schiller had been apt to plead, is a thing comparatively indifferent; everything depends upon the form. The instincts of poetic genius and the deep humanity which went hand in hand with them had saved even Schiller, much more Goethe, from pushing this theory to extremes. But in the hands of smaller men it became a dangerous weapon. The more remote the matter from the common life and the common sympathies of men, the larger, the romanticists seem to argue, is the room left for the free genius of the poet; the easier is it for him to stand above his material, to play with it, to use it purely for the ends which his own fantasy dictates. Hence it was that a theory, originally devised in the interests of the classical ideal, or what its authors took for such, came in the

end to be used for a directly opposite purpose, to sanction the wildest caprices of romance. In this sense it may fairly be said that, both by action and reaction, the severities of the classical revival were the direct cause of the extravagances of romance. Schiller had led the way by disparaging the worth of human nature for the purposes of art. The romanticists might be excused for believing that they bettered his instruction when they trampled both humanity and nature under foot.

Novels of Tieck.

The tale, long or short, came no less easily to Tieck than the drama or the lyric. It was in this field that he first won his spurs, it was here that he obtained his most indisputable success. Of his more elaborate works in this kind the most important are *Abdallah* (1792-93), *William Lovell* (1792-96), and *Franz Sternbald*,[1] originally begun in concert with Wackenroder (1798). The two former may fairly be described as variations upon the same theme, but with wholly different embellishments. In each a youth, born with high aspirations, falls under the spell of a mysterious being who, with his own ends to serve, drags his victim deeper and deeper into degradation and crime. In the handling of this gloomy subject *Abdallah*, which is by far the less ambitious of the two, is also by far the more successful. The oriental setting, the visions and apparitions,

[1] This and the *Herzensergiessungen eines Kunstliebenden Klosterbruders* (1797), also the joint work of Tieck and Wackenroder, are singled out for attack by Meyer in *Kunst und Alterthum* (see above, p. 296).

the unblushing horrors of the close, are much better suited to the fantastic genius of the author than the futile domesticities of the modern replica. In *William Lovell*, linger as he may over his English gardens and his Italian cottages, he is forced at last to land us in the "diablerie" which, in spite of his more than Radcliffian labours to account for it, is utterly out of keeping with the drawing-room sentimentalities of the rest. Moreover, the dramatic weakness common to the whole school is here forced upon us in a peculiarly obtrusive form. The hero of the piece is justly defined by his evil genius as a "philosophic and inconsequent fool." If the word "criminal" had been added the description would have been complete. In such a character what probability is there, and what possible interest?

Popular tales.

In the popular tale, the Volksmärchen, the author is more at his ease, and here his success is incontestable. The type, of which he was almost the creator, exactly suited his peculiar combination of qualities: the wistful fancy, which never failed him, on the one hand; the simplicity and command of natural incident and imagery, which belonged to his better moments, upon the other. To say that he equals the Grimms would be flattery. He uses a more elaborate pitcher, and he draws his water farther from the source. The taste of the rock where the spring rose is still discernible, but it is far fainter with him than with his great successors. The best of these tales is *Der blonde Eckhart* (1796); next to it, but at a long distance, is *Der Pokal* (1811).

In the critical writings of his after years, Tieck is extremely severe on the later outgrowths of romance, and that not only in Germany but in England and France. Much of his scorn, in particular his sneers at Scott and Hugo, may be set down to jealousy. But, in condemning Werner at any rate, he might have remembered that he was passing sentence against himself.

Werner.

Among the writers of this group, Werner (1768-1823) is the most sincere and, as dramatist, the most accomplished. Unstable as water in character, he found his one hold in a mystical religiosity which, starting from a strange and highly unorthodox blend of Christianity and Freemasonry, eventually led him within the fold of the Catholic Church (1811). It is this that gives the theme to most of his dramas, and supplies them with such interest as they possess. A long list of plays bears witness to this obsession. Attila and Leo the Great, Henry the Second and Saint Cunegunde, the founding of the Teutonic Order, the destruction of the Templars, the Hussite war, the revolt of Luther against the Papacy,—these constitute a fatally complete history of Latin Christianity, and are used by Werner, with the wildest contempt of all historic possibilities,[1] as so many texts for the glosses of his peculiar creed. All, with the exception of *Cunegunde*, were written before his conversion. The most important of them are perhaps *Die Söhne des*

[1] This reaches its height in Attila, who is represented as an amiable blend of Solomon and Napoleon.

Thals (the Templars, 1801-2) and *Martin Luther* or *Die Weihe der Kraft* (1807). Both, like most of his other pieces, show a remarkable command of stage effect; the scene in which Charles V. and the magnates of the Empire defile before Luther at Worms being, in a melodramatic way, particularly impressive. But in both, the mystical vapour—the Baphometic mummeries of the one, the eternal hyacinths and carbuncles of the other—gives an air of unreality to the whole. In both, the determination of the author to employ his characters as the mouthpiece of his own mystical doctrines goes far to destroy the vigorous, if somewhat coarse, talent for dramatic portraiture which he undoubtedly possessed. And as that doctrine, at least in *Die Söhne des Thals*, involves a justification of wholesale lying and deception, he has justly been charged with confounding all distinctions of right and wrong.

Der vierundzwanzigste Februar.

There is, however, one play in which Werner throws aside his romantic machinery and his adulterated history, and trusts solely to his native talent. This is *Der vierundzwanzigste Februar*, a tragedy of peasant life, which was performed under Goethe's direction at Weimar —and again, under the guidance of Madame de Staël, at Coppet—in 1809, and published, with an amazing Prologue in which Goethe figures as Helios and Madame de Staël as Aspasia, in 1814. It is by far the least ambitious, and for that reason by far the best, of his dramas,—perfectly simple both in plan and execution. The curse of murder lies upon the

beggared cottage where the scene is laid. Kunz, the peasant who owns it, has years before caused the death of his father. His son, as a mere child, has killed his sister in play. And now, as the fatal day comes round, Kunz, in despair and ignorance, robs and murders one who proves to be his son. The father, son, and mother, who are the only characters in the play, are sketched with a bold sweep; the sense of overmastering doom is powerfully maintained; and the effect is, as it is intended to be, one of unmitigated gloom. The sole fault of the play—and it is perhaps less fault than misfortune—is to have set the fashion of the "Schicksalstragödien," which for the next few years, from the hands of Grillparzer, Müllner, and others, swept Germany like a deluge. These may have borrowed part, and that the most questionable, of Werner's apparatus. His dramatic truth, his grip of local surroundings, his command of tragic terror, they utterly ignored. *Der vierundzwanzigste Februar*, it is disappointing to record, was the last flash of Werner's genius. The "magnum opus" of his closing years, *Die Mutter der Maccabäer* (1820), is a pure piece of religious sensationalism, not improved by imitation of Calderon at his worst.

Novalis.

Novalis, the name assumed by Friedrich von Hardenberg (1772-1801), was bound by close ties of friendship to Tieck and the younger Schlegel, and was deeply influenced by both. His romance, *Heinrich von Osterdingen*, is a graft from the "blue flower" of the former; his

Aphorisms, from the *Fragmente* of the latter, to which indeed he was one of the contributors. The romance has all the characteristic qualities of the school. The story is childish, the sentiment overpowering, the atmosphere that of the hothouse and the thurible. It is the quips of Heine that alone save it from oblivion.[1] The same hectic flush is spread over his *Hymnen an die Nacht*, which, however, contain passages of surprising beauty. The Aphorisms, on the other hand, have solid worth. They are always ingenious, often profound, and they are quite free from the aggressive conceit of the model supplied by Schlegel. They are, in fact, the subtlest and most suggestive record, which has come down to us, of the romantic theories. Had his life been spared, he would probably have produced finer and truer work than any of the brotherhood.

Richter.

The last of the romantic writers who calls for notice is Richter (1762-1825). The English reader, who comes to his works with a knowledge of all that Carlyle said in his praise and all that Carlyle owed to him, will be apt to feel bitter disappointment. He is not the Titan that he seemed to his Scottish adorer; and even his humour is, too often, intolerably forced. Yet he has marvellous flashes both of humour and pathos; he has a startling subtlety of psychological

[1] Heine, *Romantische Schule*, Buch II. *Heinrich* was devised as an elaborate counterblast to *Wilhelm Meister*, which Novalis denounces as "ein *Candide* gegen die Poesie gerichtet." *Fragmente* (ed. 1805, 2 vols.), ii. 251. The same phrase occurs in one of his letters to Tieck; see Holtei, *Briefe an Tieck*, i. 307.

analysis; and, in his moments of inspiration, he has a depth of thought and feeling which, if we except Novalis, was denied to his romantic brethren. A selection from his writings could easily be made, and was in fact made by Carlyle, which would give the highest impression of his powers. But, to secure this end, it would be necessary to throw a veil over his deliberate surrender to the wildest caprice of a naturally unruly fancy, over his incapacity for sustained thought or imagination, over the amazing irresponsibility of his moral judgments. Of his many books, perhaps the most notable are *Hesperus* (1792-94), *Siebenkäs* (1794-96), *Titan* (1800-3), *Flegeljahre* (1802-5), and *Die Vorschule der Æsthetik* (1804). And of these, *Titan* and *Siebenkäs* are the most characteristic. The former is clearly an echo of *Wilhelm Meister;* and that not only in its general motive, but in its attempt to paint the manners of high society, to which the author was admitted by a circle of adoring ladies, and in its supernatural mummeries, which prove to be a skilful manipulation of ventriloquism and wax figures. All this is as poor as can be; and the plan of the book excludes those naïve scenes of simple life which give charm to *Quintus Fixlein* (1796) and other tales of the same kind. But it is redeemed by some fine, if somewhat vague, passages of natural description, which manifestly inspired certain well-known pages of *Sartor Resartus.* The merits of *Siebenkäs* are of a far higher order. It suffers, towards the end, from a severe outbreak of the romantic lunacies; it is swollen by distracting digressions, and even the

main thread of the story is unduly spun out. It has, however, the simplicity and sincerity in which *Titan* is conspicuously lacking; and, painting as it does the struggling life in which the author was bred and which it would have been well for him never to have deserted, it gives abundant opportunity for the humour and the pathos, the keen observation and deep reflection, in which he excelled. That Carlyle should have placed it below *Titan*, especially when we consider that he owed to it far more than he owed to *Titan*, is one of those caprices which defy all rational explanation.

His humour.

Two remarks may be added about the more general aspects of Richter's work. As a humourist, he has been compared with Sterne and with Carlyle. And doubtless he has affinities with both. There is, however, a significant difference. His humour lies for the most part in the collocation of incongruous ideas and images — the latter laboriously gleaned and treasured up from his miscellaneous reading, a process piously recorded in footnotes which give his novels the appearance of Grote's *History* or a school edition of an ancient Classic. Of the sense of humour in character, with which both Sterne and Carlyle were richly endowed, he has comparatively little trace. The other point concerns his relation to the romantic school. Curiously enough, he began as a personal antagonist of its leading members; hence his satire on Fichte, *Clavis Fichtiana*, originally published as an appendix to the first volume of *Titan*. A little later he became

familiar with the brotherhood, Fichte included, and ranked himself as one of them, apparently not much to their liking. But, whatever his personal relations, he is a romantic to the core. Humour apart, he has all the vices and all the virtues of the school—both, perhaps, on an exaggerated scale.

Kotzebue.

Goethe and Schiller on the one hand, the Romanticists on the other, these between them went far to divide the literary energies of Germany at the close of the old century and the beginning of the new. There is, however, one writer who stood apart from both camps, a literary Ishmaelite, who received no quarter from either party and revenged himself by a popularity to which no other writer, with the possible exception of Goethe—the Goethe of *Werther*—could lay claim. This is Kotzebue (1761-1819), whose plays went the round of Europe, who for a long time was regarded as the representative genius of Germany, and whose name has now passed into a byword for all that is flashy, hollow, and sentimental. His serious pieces deserve almost all the ill that has been said of them; and they deserve it in a surprising variety of ways. The mawkishness of *Menschenhass und Reue* (1789, known to readers of Thackeray as *The Stranger*), the childish sentimentalities of *Der Graf von Burgund* (1797), the wooden Schillerisms of *Gustav Wasa* (1801), the cheap supernaturalism of his later ventures,—these do much to account for the contempt in which the author has been held by the critics. They show how completely he was the child

of fashion, dancing in turn to each of the tunes called by the fleeting fancy of the hour. But his comedies, and the comic interludes in his more solemn pieces, are a very different matter; they deserve praise far higher than they have commonly received. To literature, in any high sense, they cannot pretend. But they are a startling instance of what dramatic instinct and mother wit can accomplish without it. Burlesque, farce, serious comedy, gay comedy, the comedy of manners,—in all he has produced excellent pieces; pieces which may still certainly be read, and one would think even acted, with great applause. Nor is it only the coarser qualities of the dramatist that he possesses; an inexhaustible fertility of invention and a keen eye for effective situations. He has also a ready flow of appropriate and lively dialogue, a pretty wit, and a rich fund of satiric, but not unkindly, observation. His best pieces, apart from the burlesque on Friedrich Schlegel already mentioned, are perhaps *Armuth und Edelsinn* (1795) and *Falsche Scham* (1797), among the comedies; *Der Wildfang* (1797) and *Der Wirrwarr* (1802), of the farces; and *Die deutschen Kleinstädter* (1802) as a comedy of manners. The last is still widely read in Germany, and Krähwinkel survives as a type of provincial narrowness. The play was avowedly suggested by *La Petite Ville* of Picard (1801). But the German carries off all the honours on a comparison. Picard's characters are conventional, and his satire not too good-natured. Kotzebue, on the other hand, knew provincial officialism as Trollope knew the cathedral clergy; and his

satire, laughable as it is, is entirely free from malice. After the war of liberation, Kotzebue deeply affronted the somewhat heated national sentiment of the day, and was assassinated by a student. The bitterest feeling was aroused on both sides by this unhappy deed.

Achievement of the romantic school.

In parting from the romantic writers of Germany —and, for these purposes, even Kotzebue may be reckoned in their ranks — it is right to ask ourselves how much of permanent value they contributed to the literature of their country. In the field of learning and, to a less degree, in that of literary criticism, not only Germany but the whole community of letters is in their debt. When Friedrich Schlegel began his History of Greek Poetry, he entered on a task more original and more fruitful than he himself was fully aware of. He was among the first to treat the literature of a given country as a whole. He was the first to realise that this whole is no mere assemblage of detached details, but a living tissue of thought and imagination. Still more fruitful was his work on the language and literature of India. For here it was not merely the scope of an old study to be enlarged. It was a new science, a new group of sciences, to be created. Comparative grammar and comparative mythology both sprang, and sprang within a few years, from the foundations laid by the author of *Lucinde*. In the field of imagination, it must be sadly confessed, the same praise cannot be awarded. The body of imaginative work produced by the romantic

school was immense; its worth is little or nothing. In Tieck and Werner there are occasional gleams; in Richter and Novalis there are the scattered limbs of a true poet. But if we except *Der vierundzwanzigste Februar*—and that has nothing to say to romance—there is no single work which, as a whole, can claim even remotely to satisfy the imagination. And, if we ask the reason of this failure, we shall find it—so far as such weaknesses can be traced to anything but deficiency of genius—in the false conception from which these men deliberately started. Poetry, as they conceived it, is divorced from life, and withdraws itself into a region of pure fantasy. And such poetry, it may safely be said, is doomed from the beginning. The greater the talent that is put into it, the more inevitable, the more complete, is its condemnation. It may be said that it is the essence of romantic poetry to create a world other than that in which man's daily interests are cast. And this is true. But in all great romantic poetry this world of fantasy is knit, though it be with threads of gossamer, with the homely web of human experience and human cravings. It is so with the *Ancient Mariner* and *Christabel;* it is so with *Eviradnus* and *Gastibelza;* it is so with *Erlkönig* and *Die Braut von Korinth.* And it is because the creations of Tieck and his fellow-workers offer no such echoes of reality that they have long ago been consigned to the museum of literary curiosities.

In the years immediately following the romantic carnival, a new stream of humanity was poured into the literature of Germany. The ideals which in-

spired the struggle against Napoleon found stirring expression in the lyrics of Arndt, of Körner, and of Uhland. A burning hatred of falsehood, the disillusionment which sprang from repeated failures in the quest of love, truth, and justice, are the source of the poetry of Heine.

Contrast with succeeding writers.

Apart from the work of Goethe, the most memorable achievement of Germany during this period was in the region of philosophy,—an achievement which, in the first instance, is bound up with the name of Kant.

Philosophy —Kant.

Kant (1724-1804) had almost reached the threshold of old age before he entered on the task which was to change the face of modern thought. The flower of his life had been spent in diligent pursuit of the orthodox philosophy of the day; or, what in the issue was to prove more important, in that close study of mathematics, physics, and anthropology, which gave unrivalled authority to his subsequent utterances on the nature of knowledge and the processes of scientific thought. It was not until he was fifty-seven that the first of his great books, *Die Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, was published (1781); to be followed by *Prolegomena zu jeder künftigen Metaphysik* (1783), *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten* (1785), *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft* (1788), and *Kritik der Urtheilskraft* (1790). The two first of these are concerned with the problems of speculative philosophy; the third and fourth with ethics; the last is largely devoted to a statement of

his theory of the imagination. Of his remaining works, which among other things deal with Political Philosophy and the Philosophy of History, it will be more convenient to speak in connection with Fichte.

Kritik der reinen Vernunft.

The chief of these treatises, and that which may fairly be said to contain the germ of all the rest, is the *Kritik der reinen Vernunft.* And the subsequent history of philosophy has proved it to be, as indeed was intended by the author, a weapon of two edges. It is aimed on the one hand against the materialists; on the other, against the metaphysical dogmatism in which Kant himself had been born and bred: on the one hand, against Locke—or rather, those thinkers, mainly French, who, in building up a materialist system, had detached and expanded certain elements of Locke's teaching; on the other hand, against the school which for the last fifty years had dominated his own country, the school of Leibnitz as transformed by the influence of Wolff. And, as time went on, it became clear that Kant's own interest lay far more in the latter than the former object.

Idealist element.

Such, however, is not the impression conveyed by the earlier sections of the book; and it is not the direction in which its influence has told most deeply. The most original part of the *Kritik* is that in which, basing himself on partial hints taken from Locke and, far more, from Hume, Kant insists on the elements contributed to experience *à priori;* on the impossibility of deriving such conceptions as space and time, cause and sub-

stance, from the impressions of the senses; on the necessity of the inference that they are brought by the mind to the process of perception, and cannot by any possibility have been subsequently abstracted from it. Yet, without these and other kindred conceptions, what would be left that we could call experience? Nothing but a vague mass of floating impressions, the "manifold of sensation"; without connection, without order; nay, in the strictest sense of the terms, without a local habitation or a name.

Agnostic element.

But, having granted so much to the idealists, Kant is nervously anxious to guard against the demand for more. If the *à priori* element in knowledge be so great, if the constitutive powers of the mind be so deep-reaching, what ground, he asks himself, is there for denying that they enable us to arrive at truth concerning things which, *ex hypothesi*, lie beyond the present conditions of man's experience: concerning the nature of God, for instance, or the immortality of the soul? These and the like were the favourite themes of the Wolffian philosophy; and Kant's labours were largely prompted by the conviction that philosophy, so applied, was no better than pretentious ignorance. In virtue, however, of his Kritik—that is, his analysis of the powers and workings of the mind—he believed himself to have discovered the secret which was for ever to bar the way against such unprofitable discussions. It is true, he argued, that objects are constituted, and that experience is ordered, by the creative action of the mind. But it is also true that, before

the mind can put forth these creative powers, something must be given it to put them forth upon. And that something can only be given in sensation. Unless this condition be fulfilled, the mind is merely feeding upon wind, and deluding itself with its own empty dreams. Now, from the nature of the case, neither the soul nor God can ever be presented to the mind through a sensible intuition. And that is the reason why no argumentation can ever bring them within the range of human experience, nor ever supply the conditions which are indispensable to human knowledge. To ignore this is not only futile and misleading, but it involves the mind of necessity in a train of contradictions—the famous "antinomies of pure reason"—from which no human subtlety can find an outlet. Kant had started by proving that "intuitions, sensible impressions, without conceptions are blind." He ends by insisting that "conceptions without content"—a content given only in sensation—"are empty."

Its significance.

Waiving for the moment the validity of this conception, we may pause to indicate its bearing on the prevailing current of opinion in Kant's day and in ours. As has often been said, in this part of his thesis Kant does little more than give philosophical form to the destructive arguments of Voltaire and the Encyclopedists. For that reason he was denounced by Mendelssohn, the chief survivor of the deist philosophers in Germany, as the "great iconoclast"; and, on like grounds, he has been hailed in later days as the true founder of the creed of the agnostics. Both descriptions are perfectly correct.

And it is no small testimony, that his philosophy should have embodied tendencies which have proved to be so firmly rooted in human nature and have wielded so deep an influence on the thought of the last five generations. True or false, it is certain that these opinions have never, either before or since, been stated with any approach to the precision or cogency which they receive from the hands of Kant.

Its inconsistency with other elements of his theory.

Yet the conclusion itself, it will be admitted, is disputable. Still more disputable are the arguments by which it is supported. These may roughly be reduced to two. In the first place, we have the contention that all knowledge is limited by the senses, and that it is a fallacy to draw inferences from that which we have experienced through sensible intuition to that which can never become the object of such a process. Does Kant himself, we are compelled to ask, observe this principle? Does he not himself insist on the necessity of passing behind the objects which the mind has constituted out of sensible impressions to forces—attractive, electrical, and the rest—which can surely never become the object of sensible intuition, which are arrived at by a purely intellectual inference? It may be perfectly true that the inference by which we conclude the existence of such forces is a more cogent and certain inference than that by which we argue to the being and nature of God. But the difference is one of degree rather than of kind. It does not lie in the fact that the former are presented to us in sensible intuition and the latter

not. In both cases alike the mind passes beyond the mere sensible intuition to that which, rightly or wrongly, is held to be implicitly contained in it.

Due to a survival of alien ideas.

But another argument lies behind. It is unlikely that Kant would ever have committed himself to the above position had he not from first to last been haunted by the distinction between "phenomena" and "noumena," between "appearances" and "things in themselves," which he had inherited from the past, but which is, in truth, incompatible with all that is most original and vital in his speculation. To the pure idealist, to the Platonist, the "noumenon," the "thing in itself," has an intelligible meaning. To the pure materialist "the thing in itself," though not the "noumenon," may have an intelligible, if a very different, meaning. To the former it represents that world of thought, of reality, which stands over against the world of appearance, and to which, by an intense effort, the mind of man is capable of rising, either habitually or in moments of exceptional exaltation. To the latter it represents that which lies altogether outside of the mind, and independent of it; that which, being external to the mind, is the true cause of all that constitutes our experience; that which, for want of a more accurate term, may be described as brute matter.

But, to one who thinks as Kant does, what possible meaning is left to the "thing in itself"? It cannot mean the world of pure thought. For, according to Kant, apart from sensible intuition—here *ex hypothesi*

excluded — such a world neither has nor can have any existence. Nor, again, can it represent that which lies outside of the mind. For it is the essence of his doctrine to insist that nothing can come within the purview of the mind except that which, originally given "blindly" in sensible intuition, has been stamped with the forms, intuitional and intellectual, imposed by the mind itself. All that stands in relation to the mind at all, stands so because it conforms to the conditions under which alone the mind is capable of working. Nothing which does not so conform can be conceived by the mind as having any existence whatsoever. Even to speak of the "thing in itself"—much more to speak of it, and therefore to define it, by way of contrast with the "phenomenal" —is to bring it within the borders, and therefore under the conditions, of the phenomenal; to describe it in the same breath as both in and out of relation to our experience. It is, as Heine wittily said, an Irish bull in philosophy.

So presented, the "thing in itself" has just enough of reality to put us out of conceit with the world of actual experience. It has not enough to furnish any effective substitute for that which it has discredited. It is a ghost invoked to throw doubt upon the records of our waking hours; yet, as soon as we seek to grasp it, it proves still more impalpable than they. It is of power to reduce all experience, all science, to an illusion; it is not of power to put any substance in their place.

Its consequences not fully realised by Kant.

From this result it would seem impossible to escape. Yet we may be very sure that it was not the result intended by Kant. On the contrary, he would seem to have regarded a reference to the unknowable "thing in itself" as the one safeguard for the reality of "appearances." Having concluded, in the first part of his argument, that the world is known to us only under the conditions imposed by our senses on the one hand and our understanding on the other, he takes alarm at his own boldness. Is not this, he seems to argue, to reduce the world to a mere appearance, created by the particular organism of the human body and the human mind? And if so, what is to assure us that this creation is not a mere illusion? Can we not save "appearances" by positing something, unknown and unknowable, which corresponds to them, outside of ourselves and in reality?

Dualism of his speculative system.

To vindicate the reality of the known by assuming something unknown and unknowable, to save appearances by supposing something which does not even reach the dignity of the "apparent," is no very hopeful way out of the difficulty. But it is at least an honest attempt to face the central problem of speculative philosophy. And it is the supreme merit of the "transcendental Analytic" to have once more brought that problem to the front, to have presented it in an entirely new light, and to have insisted on the urgency of its solution. Kant's own solution, it is true, can hardly claim to be satisfactory. The general effect of it was to leave him face

to face with a dualism: the world of mind on the one hand, the world of reality—one is almost tempted to say, the world of matter—on the other. And from this dualism he himself was never able to escape. To get rid of one of the two discordant elements—the element which is *not* mind,—to prove that the world is of one "seamless texture," that it is solely the work of reason,—that reason which is in man but yet above man, which appears in time but is itself eternal,—was the ceaseless effort of his successors. But whether the task proved more possible to the disciples than to the master, is a doubtful matter.

His Ethics.

In passing to Kant's ethical system, we are at once struck by a difference of temper. The dualism of the speculative treatise is, indeed, still there. It appears in the sharp contrast between the "free" will and the "pathologically affected" will; between the "categoric imperative," which commands nothing in particular, and the endless complexity of man's actual duties. It declares itself in the embarrassment which Kant betrays when he seeks, as he could not but seek, to fling a bridge from the one region to the other. But, while in speculative matters the scale is heavily weighted against the originative powers of the mind, in matters of conduct he declares himself unequivocally for the "autonomy of the will." More than this, he recognises that certain speculative "postulates" are involved in the admission of that autonomy, in the acceptance of a moral law as unconditionally binding upon man.

And among such postulates he hastens to reckon those which he had explicitly excluded from the ken of speculative reason—the existence of God and the immortality of the soul. It is quite true that these postulates are referred not to the idea of autonomy itself, but to certain conceptions which, in Kant's view, formed a necessary complement to it: to the conception of happiness, as the just reward of goodness; to the conception of infinite perfectibility, as necessarily bound up with the commands of a moral law which, under existing limitations, it is beyond man's power fully to obey. And it may fairly be questioned whether such conceptions are in truth as necessary as they appeared to Kant. These objections, however, are hardly to the point. It remains true that Kant himself honestly believed the above conceptions to be necessary; and that, given their necessity, they do inevitably involve the postulates of which he speaks.

More consistently idealist.

That being so, it is clear that the ethical system of Kant gives back to reason no small part of the ground which his speculative system had taken from it. In fact, the first serious blow dealt at the "iconoclasm" of the earlier treatise came from the hand of the iconoclast himself. This, however, is apart from the main issue of ethical inquiry. But here, too, Kant is no less decisively idealist. And the enduring value of his moral doctrine lies in his uncompromising rejection of all hedonist or utilitarian theories; in his assertion of duty as the guiding principle of man's conduct; in his refusal

to explain away the idea of duty by identifying it with a "moral sense," or enlightened self-interest, or a refined species of pleasure, or with any other of the equivalents suggested in his own day or since. It may well be that, in his crusade against these specifics, he suffered himself to be led into positions which it is difficult, perhaps impossible, to defend. The assertion that an act ceases to be morally good, directly a sense of pleasure enters into the motive of the agent, leads directly to an asceticism—not to say, a pharisaism — which is intrinsically unsound, and which Kant himself can hardly have intended. The formula, again, to which he reduces the moral law is so abstract as to leave no room for the existence of specific duties, much less for that progress in man's conception of such duties which, as Hegel and others were to point out, is inseparably bound up with the development of his corporate energies, of the concrete institutions of particular communities and states.

His significance to the life of his time.

All this may be allowed; and it was the work of Kant's successors to point out these weak places in his argument, to bring down his theory from heaven to earth. But, after all, the main thing needed when Kant entered on his campaign was to redeem the idea of duty from the motley disguises in which it had been clothed by Helvétius and Bentham, with their theories of material satisfaction, on the one side; by the pietists, with their doctrine of spiritual happiness, upon the other. And it is probable that few things contrib-

uted so much as the moral side of Kant's teaching to enhance man's belief in his own dignity; to give him confidence for the creative work, whether in social reconstruction or in poetry, which lay before him during the generation that followed. If in his speculative theory he presents many analogies with Voltaire, in his moral doctrine, and in the religious belief which is closely connected with it, he offers, though with an added touch of sternness, some resemblance to Rousseau. He draws into explicit consciousness that conception of reason, as a creative faculty, which we have seen to be implicit in the ideas of Burke, and which, in fact, lay at the very heart of the romantic movement.

It remains only to speak of his theory of the imagination, as worked out in the *Kritik der Urtheilskraft.*

His æsthetic theory.

Nowhere is he more original than in this field of his inquiry; nowhere is his genius for analysis more powerfully displayed. Following an old tradition, recently revived by Burke,[1] he begins by distinguishing between the sense of the beautiful and that of the sublime. Under one or the other of these, he argues, all the energies of the imagination must necessarily fall.

The beauty of an object, he holds, whether in nature or in art, consists not in its appeal to the moral side of our being, nor again in the satisfac-

[1] Burke's Treatise was well known to Kant. See *Urtheilskraft*, 1st edition, pp. 126-129. It was also well known to Lessing, who made some interesting notes upon it (1758), and who would seem to have been influenced by Burke's discussion on Poetry and Words (Part V.) See Lessing's *Werke* (ed. Göring), xix. 202-6.

tion which it offers to our intellect; not in its power of touching our feelings, as men among men, nor in its perfection, as presenting the fulfilment of a given end in the world of nature. The latter, indeed, cannot altogether be excluded. For it is an inseparable quality of beauty to suggest the fulfilment of an end; though what that end in particular may be, is left wholly undetermined. With this qualification, it remains true that the essence of beauty lies in its capacity for arousing the free play of our imagination and, in a sense to be defined later, of our intellectual powers also. And that capacity it is impossible for us to analyse further. The field of beauty, accordingly, lies not so much in the forms offered by the world without, as in the workings of man's mind,—in the unconstrained and harmonious energy of his mental faculties. Its raw material, indeed, is necessarily drawn either from the world of man or the world of nature. For these are the only worlds of which we have experience, or which offer anything determinate for the mind to feed on. The imagination, however, uses them simply as material; as a storehouse of images which it is free to reconstruct according to the instinctive promptings of its own fantasy. And to the imagination they assume a content entirely different from that which they offer to our moral or intellectual experience. Indeed, the more freely they are handled by the imagination, the more completely they are emptied of all association with our ordinary experience, the more pure and the more legitimate is their appeal to our sense of beauty.

The beautiful.

Very different in its working is the sense of the sublime. In the last resort, it is based on the deepest moral instincts of man; upon his conviction of his freedom, of his power to bid defiance to danger and to fate. Before he can fully rise to this conviction, however, it is necessary that he should himself be free from the danger which arouses it; that he should face terror not as a pressing reality, but by an effort of reflection and imagination. It is only when he is beyond the range of personal peril, when he looks on the raging of the elements from a place of safety, when he contemplates the heroism which for the moment he is not called upon to share, that he can truly be said to enter into the secret of the sublime. Then, and then only, can he realise the vastness of the natural forces at work around him, or bring home to his imagination the grandeur of the energy which nerves the will to conquer fear or to endure without quailing the most cruel buffetings of fortune. These are admitted by most thinkers to be the two sources of the sublime. Their only omission has been the failure to recognise that both, in the last resort, depend upon the autonomy of the will; upon the power of reason, as a practical faculty, to reject all promptings from without, and obey only that law which it imposes on itself.

The sublime.

The one other point in Kant's æsthetic theory which there is need to mention is his insistence on the universality—or, to speak more correctly, the "general validity"—of imaginative judgments. In

every case, he urges, when we make such a judgment, we make it not for ourselves only, but for all who claim to be "men of taste." This is our instinctive and invariable assumption; and that our judgments, in this as in other matters, are liable to error, is no argument against it. The fact, indeed, is not to be disputed; and all attempts to explain it away are foredoomed to failure. Even the man who professes merely to record his personal impressions bewrays himself in doing so; for why, unless with the object of making converts, should impressions be recorded? The real difficulty lies in accounting for the fact, in discovering the speculative ground on which it rests. And on Kant, who was more keenly alive than most men to the individual, the "subjective," nature of imaginative judgments, this difficulty was bound to press with peculiar force.

General validity of æsthetic judgments.

Subjective, he admits, such judgments undoubtedly are. For they are a creative act of the mind; they call into being that which has no existence — as, in some sense, the objects of intellectual knowledge may be said to have existence — independent and apart. Individual they are, and that in a double sense. They are formed concerning individual images, which defy all attempts to bring them under general laws; and they are always *my* judgment — not that which I have taken, or can take, on authority from others. Hence the inevitable divergence between one man's verdict and another's. Yet, in spite of this, they point to a

Relation of art to life.

"common sense," widely, if not universally, diffused among mankind; a sense which, moreover, is one of the chief bonds of union between men widely separated by age and race and social institution. They are not themselves the offspring of the intellect; nor are they based, save in a quite secondary sense, upon the laws of thought without which there would be no such thing as knowledge. Yet, in a thousand ways, they draw upon the world of intellectual experience; they suggest vast ranges of thought which lie on the verge of that experience, but which the intellect, as such, is powerless to enter. And being creative—as the processes of intellectual thought are not—they spring from the supreme faculty of man's spirit; the faculty which, under one form, enables him dimly to apprehend ideas, such as that of absolute being, which lie wholly beyond his actual or possible experience; and, under another form, constitutes that which is highest and most distinctive in his experience, the world of his moral freedom. Here—in the free quickening of our energies, in its power to call the whole of our being, and not least the more spiritual and subtler elements of it, into play—is the true function of the imagination. Here, and not in any definite "lesson," moral or intellectual, is the point where art touches the most familiar experience of life.

Significance of Kant's theory.

The most obvious service of Kant in this field is to have freed the imagination from bondage to the supposed moral needs of man; to have given it a will of its own, and a kingdom in which to work out its inalienable rights. His, said Hegel,

was "the first rational word spoken on the subject."[1] And, when we remember the havoc wrought by the moralists in æsthetic theory and criticism, we cannot deny the verdict to be just. No previous philosopher in modern times had recognised so decisively that the imagination is not there to teach a moral lesson. None had approached him in the power of laying bare the speculative grounds on which the independence of the imagination is to be explained, nor in the genius with which he tracks out and analyses the subtlest workings of the artistic sense. After him, little remained for the theorist save to bridge the gulf which he had left between the imagination and the world from which it draws its material; to define more precisely the relation between the imagination and the common reason of man; and to work out, in greater detail and with a fuller wealth of illustration, the specific functions of the several arts and the progressive stages of their historical development. The two first of these tasks were, in some measure, carried out by Schiller. The last, together with a far more complete and pregnant treatment of the whole, was reserved for Hegel.

Schiller.

The contributions of Schiller in this matter belong to the years 1792-95. The most important of them are *Anmuth und Würde* (1793) and *Die Æsthetische Erziehung des Menschen*, a series of letters originally written to the Duke of Augustenburg in 1793-94, but recast in the latter year, and published in 1795. These, like all his other writings in this vein, are avowedly based on the philosophy of

[1] *Geschichte der Philosophie*, iii. 543.

Kant, and without the *Kritik der Urtheilskraft* they could hardly have taken rise. At the same time, alike in their phraseology, in their somewhat hazardous "construction" of history, and in their persistent moral preoccupation, they betray something of the influence of Fichte, whose acquaintance he made early in 1794.

The objective basis of beauty.

The first aim that Schiller seems to have set before himself was to find an "objective basis" for that sense of beauty which Kant had pronounced to consist solely in the subjective activities of the mind; to determine whether any recurrent quality is discernible in the objects which habitually stir the imagination to activity.[1] Such a quality he believed himself to discover in "freedom" or "vitality"; that is, in the impression of a free play of vital forces which we seem to derive from those objects—the form and, in particular, the face of man, for instance—to which we are apt to attribute the highest beauty. This explanation, which was virtually adopted by Hegel, doubtless accounts for much; and, so far as it goes, it may be accepted. But it is clear that there are many cases—music, for instance, and landscape, whether in nature or painting—which it fails to cover. And we may suspect that to be the reason why Kant, to whose "subjective" analysis it is the obvious counterpart, left it on one

[1] Den objektiven Begriff des Schönen, der sich *eo ipso* auch zu einem objektiven Grundsatz des Geschmacks qualificirt und an welchem Kant verzweifelt, glaub' ich gefunden zu haben.—Letter to Körner of Dec. 21, 1792. *Briefwechsel mit Körner*, t. ii., p. 355.

side. It is to be noted, moreover, that Schiller himself does not insist upon it as, considering its importance, he would have been likely to do, had he felt sure of its validity.

Ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen.

In considering the bearing of imaginative art upon the intellectual and moral life of man, he displays greater confidence. This, in fact, is the main subject of his most elaborate treatise, the *Æsthetic Letters*. And it is round this that he groups the most significant of his thoughts upon the nature of art. Art is to him, both for the individual and the race, the first schoolmistress of man—the chief agency which leads him from barbarism to civilisation, from the bondage of the senses to the freedom of the spirit. This it does, because it contains within itself—and that, not as derived, but as original energies—the two elements from which the whole life of man, lower as well as higher, is ultimately drawn; the element of sense which, in another application, yields his physical life and the raw material both of his active powers and his knowledge; and the element of form which, in another application, yields the freedom of his will and the laws which bind his scattered perceptions into a connected whole of knowledge—in a word, that by which he impresses his own being and personality upon the brute matter given him from without. As fused in the imagination, however, these two elements assume a distinctive form—a form under which the identity of each is merged in an entirely independent energy,

described by Schiller as the *Spieltrieb;* the impulse which prompts man to abstract himself from the twofold world of knowledge and of duty, to leave his imagination free to play around them, to remould them according to his own fantasy. Accepting this impulse, in the first instance, purely as one of play, he identifies himself step by step with the ideas to which it has reference, becomes "native and endued into their element," and, what is yet more significant, acquires, from the mere act of playing with them, that sense of spiritual freedom on which the whole of his subsequent progress, intellectual and moral, ultimately depends. Thus his very play leads to earnest; his imagination does more to equip him for the serious work of life than either thought or action, as such, could ever have accomplished.

Its relation to Kant,

The relation of all this to the theory of Kant is clear enough. And in one point—a point, however, which belongs more immediately to ethical than æsthetic doctrine—the disciple may be admitted to have corrected the master. Kant, as we have seen, had asserted that an act, to be pure, must be repugnant to the agent. Schiller replies that the very reverse is the case; that, until obedience to the moral law has become an instinct, until it has passed into the very nature of the agent, the will cannot be said to have achieved its freedom. And it is because the imagination paves the way to this end, and indeed anticipates it, that its work in the general economy of man's life is so important. Kant,

while acknowledging the "master hand" of his critic, was firm in rejecting his conclusion. But, in this instance, the poet was in the right and the philosopher in the wrong.

And to Die Künstler.

No less clear is the relation between the *Æsthetic Letters* and the theory expounded some six years earlier in *Die Künstler*. The *Letters* indeed are a curious fusion of that theory with the doctrine of Kant. And it is manifest that, so far as he departed from Kant, Schiller was treading, and at moments became conscious that he was treading, upon dangerous ground. With all his efforts to avoid it, he betrays a constant tendency to saddle the imagination once more with the task of moral instruction of which Kant had striven to relieve it. And, in his endeavour to escape from this danger, he takes refuge in the opposite extreme, and declares it to be the mission of art to purge life of its harsh contrasts, to give back a softened echo of its passions, to raise man to a region in which the rush and strain of conflict are forgotten. This is the prose version of the theory which the *Realm of Shadows* embodied in poetry; which *Die Braut von Messina*, with more or less of consistency, carried out in practice. But it was not so that either the Greek dramatists or Shakespeare conceived of tragedy.

On the whole, no reader of Schiller's critical writings can fail to be struck with the clear grasp of philosophic principle which they reveal, nor with the extraordinary vividness of his exposition. His

literary classifications are apt to be arbitrary; his judgment of men and poems is uncertain. But he never writes without throwing a flood of light upon his subject; and, as a master of the more stately forms of prose, he has no rival among his countrymen.

Fichte.

With Fichte (1762-1814) we return to the main stream of philosophical inquiry. As has been said, the most pressing question bequeathed by Kant to his successors was this: Is it necessary to suppose something unknown and unknowable, outside of man's experience and corresponding to his sensations? or is it possible to regard all experience as one, and as an energy of thought? Fichte was the first to take up the challenge, and he did so with a boldness which left nothing to be desired.[1] To him, the one thing that has reality is the thinking self; the whole world of experience is nothing more than the form through which that self at once asserts its freedom and gives itself determination. Thus the world of experience is implicit in the self, just as the self becomes explicit solely in and through the connected whole of its experience.

His attempt to escape from Kant's dualism.

We have here a resolute attempt to face the problem, left unsolved by Kant. But it is impossible to say that the answer offered by Fichte is satisfactory. He professes to deduce the world from the nature of

[1] *Ueber den Begriff der Wissenschaftslehre*, 1794; *Grundlage der gesammten Wissenschaftslehre*, 1794.

the self. In fact, he simply assumes its existence, and proceeds to prove, what no one has ever doubted, how necessary is its existence for any possible development of the self. How the self breaks its bounds, how it passes from its original emptiness to the fulness of knowledge and action, he was never able satisfactorily to explain. Nor, even if we admit him to have fulfilled the profession with which he started, has he really proved that which it was necessary for him to prove. The self of which he speaks, and which forms the starting-point of his whole theory, is explicitly declared to be the individual self,[1] this or that thinking individual. And can it possibly be contended that the world, as the sum of objective experience, is to be deduced from a being whose powers are manifestly to the last degree limited, and whose very life is to be measured not by æons but by years?

Significance of his earlier and later writings.

The essential service of Fichte lies not in his performance but his intention. He saw that it is the first duty of philosophy to take nothing for granted; never to rest until it has proved, if proof be possible, the unity of experience, until it has traced all the constituents of experience to the operation of thought. And, if he failed in his attempt, he at least freed philosophy from the shackles which, with all his

[1] Der theoretische Theil unserer Wissenschaftslehre . . . ist wirklich . . . der *systematische* Spinozismus; nur dass eines Jeden Ich selbst die einzige höchste Substanz ist.—*Grundlage, Werke* (Berlin, 1845), i. 122; compare p. 110.

greatness, Kant had never wholly been able to throw off: the habit of dividing the mind into water-tight compartments; the habit, more appropriate to the natural historian than to the philosopher, of accepting "matters of fact"—and this, too often, means merely matters of tradition—without inquiry into their origin. In this Fichte may fairly be said to have followed the speculative idea more faithfully than his master. And this side of his endeavours is aptly indicated in the new name which he suggested for philosophy: *Wissenschaftslehre*, the science of sciences; a name which at least has the merit of insisting on the necessity of scientific thoroughness. In the popular writings of his later years—in particular, *Das Wesen des Gelehrten* (1805)—Fichte foreshadowed a theory which involved a notable departure from his original system. No longer taking the individual for his starting-point, he now finds reality in the "divine idea which lies at the bottom of all appearance," and of which "the world of the senses and, in particular, the life of man as it is in that world," are the mere "appearance" or manifestation. To this theory, which presents obvious affinities with that simultaneously worked out by Hegel, he was never able to give philosophical expression. Its chief importance perhaps, at least for Englishmen, is that it is the theory which underlay all Carlyle's earlier writings, notably *Sartor Resartus*, and which, with many modifications—the most important being suggested by other passages in the works of Fichte himself—remained the corner-stone of his creed to the last.

Schelling.

Schelling (1775-1854) began his career as the avowed disciple of Fichte; and it was only by degrees that he worked his way to an independent, eventually a hostile, system of his own.[1] From the first, however, he shows a tendency to take the universe rather than the individual as his centre of speculation; from the first he conceives of the relation between the individual and the outward world of knowledge as something far closer and more vital than had been possible for the purely individualist theory of Fichte. To the one, the ultimate analysis of man's being lay in a bare identity with itself; to the other in "intellectual intuition," in the act by which man at once creates a world for himself and sets himself to contemplate his own creation. This conception may raise as many difficulties as it solves; but at least it frees man from the prison-house of his naked self, and sends him out into the world of nature, action, and art. And this, in fact, was the turn given by Schelling to the philosophy of his day. He conceived of man as existing only in and through a world of thought, action, and imagination. And he strove to grasp that world as, under diverse forms, the creation of one reason. As to the manifestation of reason in art and history, he contented himself, at least in his earlier writings, with scattered but often luminous hints. It was on the world of nature that

[1] Of Schelling's numerous early writings, the following may be mentioned :—*Ueber die Möglichkeit einer Form der Philosophie überhaupt*, *Vom Ich als Princip der Philosophie*, *Philosophische Briefe über Dogmatismus und Kriticismus*—all in 1795; *Von der Weltseele*, 1798; *System des transcendentalen Idealismus*, 1800.

he put forth his strength. It is here that his influence was at once most pregnant and most misleading. On the one hand, by his conception of nature as one living organism of which all specific forms of life—and, through life, of matter—are but derivatives, it can hardly be doubted that he gave an impulse to the unifying process which must always be one of the chief aims of science, and which was never more actively pursued than in the days when the genius of Schelling was at its height. On the other hand, by his irresponsible manner of handling scientific laws, by his mystical vagaries and his dabbling in the occult sciences, he did all that one man could do to throw the ideals and methods of science into confusion. Yet the great service he rendered in freeing speculative philosophy from the formless void to which Fichte had consigned it must not be forgotten. Nor must it be forgotten that it was his writings which inspired, so far as any influence from without can be said to have inspired, the profoundest reflective poetry of Goethe.

Hegel.

Hegel (1770-1831) was the last of a great line of thinkers; for, though five years older than Schelling, he did not enter the lists, as author, till twelve years later.[1] In the last resort, his creed rests on the same foundation as that of

[1] With *Die Phänomenologie des Geistes*, 1807. This is the earliest, and, if we except the *Logik* (1811-16), the most elaborate of his books. His previous writings, which, however, contain the germs of his later system, had appeared in Niethammer's *Journal* and other periodicals. The preface of the *Phänomenologie*, besides a statement and defence of the method pursued in the body of the work, contains an attack on Schelling, p. 54.

Schelling. But he grasps the central principle far more firmly, and carries it out with far greater patience and consistency. Starting from the inward necessity which drives man outward into a world of thought, action, and idealisation, he traces the first germ of this self-realisation — in thought, the bald consciousness of here and there, of this and that — onwards through the "whole series of its manifestations," to its fullest and ripest fruit in the thought, art, and civic ideals of the crowning epochs of man's history. This is the outward appearance, the *Phänomenologie*, of which the speculative counterpart is embodied in the *Logik*. With him, as with Schelling, the first step—the passage from the self to the not-self—may be hazardous enough; though by insisting that the reason of man, however limited, is yet one with the reason of the universe—a point on which, both implicitly and explicitly, he is far more consistent than Schelling—he escaped the logical difficulties in which his predecessors, notably Fichte, had been entangled. But if that first step, and the yet more fundamental conception on which it rests, be granted to him, we find ourselves led on inexorably by a double dialectic—the logical dialectic of Hegel, the natural "dialectic" which he loves to trace in the evolution of human thought and action—to the goal where he is minded to have us. The personality of man, as distinct from the general order of the universe, may vanish in the process. The types of thought and ideal, which form the links in his chain of argument, may be arbitrarily selected. But, when criticism has

done its worst, two things at least remain untouched: a speculative genius which, for subtlety, has never been surpassed, and a method which has revolutionised the whole spirit of modern thought. By no writer, either before or since, has the idea of evolution been applied over so vast a field as by Hegel; and if we except the field of natural science, in the hands of no writer has it led to more fruitful results. It was the task of Kant to dissolve human experience into its elements. It was the aim of Hegel to trace it from its germ. This is the deep-reaching change which he brought into the intellectual temper of his time.

It remains only to indicate the drift of what these writers achieved in two special subjects: political philosophy, and the theory of imaginative art.

Political theory of Kant.

In the former subject, as in all others, the first step forward was taken by Kant. In his *Rechtslehre* (1797) he is, indeed, for the most part bound hand and foot to the individualist theory identified, not altogether justly, with the name of Rousseau. Elsewhere, again, he insists, far more explicitly than any of his predecessors had done, on that necessity of distinguishing between political and moral ends, of prohibiting the State from all moral functions, which lay at the very centre of this theory and gave it so strong a hold on the conscience of mankind.[1] Yet even here there are hints that he is feeling after a wider principle. And in another writing—it is true, still in the name of the individualist theory—he sets forth with amazing clearness

[1] *Zum ewigen Frieden*, 1795.

that conception of the State, and even of humanity, as a collective whole, capable of progress, which was destined to shatter the fabric of the individualists from top to bottom.[1]

Of Fichte.

But it is in Fichte that the onward movement in political theory is more clearly to be traced; and it is here perhaps that his services to philosophy are the most solid. Starting, like Kant, from the theory which is commonly understood to be that of the *Contrat Social* — individualism pure and simple—he gradually worked his way to the conception of the State as an organism, the members of which are what they are solely in relation to the whole, and may be controlled, even to an extent that to most men would seem oppressive, in the interest of the whole. There are, moreover, in his later works two further conceptions, familiar enough to the champions of the old order, but now for the first time incorporated in the speculative theory which reflected the needs and experience of the new: the conception of the State as embodying the "permanent reason" of its members in opposition to their "occasional will"; and the conception of nationality, as the indispensable basis of political union,—that conception which united Germany against the tyranny of Napoleon and, within the next sixty years, recast the whole map of Europe.

The works in which the stages of this process are

[1] *Idee zu einer Weltgeschichte in weltbürgerlicher Absicht*, 1784. It is almost certain that this Essay, which does not fill more than a few pages, was known to Comte, and that he owed much to it.

successively traversed are *Beiträge zur Beurtheilung der französischen Revolution* (1793), *Grundlage des Naturrechts* (1796), *Der geschlossene Handelstaat*, a plea for the most extreme form of Protection which has ever entered into the wit of man (1800), *Die Staatslehre* (1813, first printed 1820), and the famous *Reden an die deutsche Nation* (1808). The two last may be described as Fichte's trumpet-call to the struggle against the common oppressor, in the course of which his own life was cut short.

Of Hegel.

The conception of the State ultimately reached by Fichte is, in its broad outlines, that which was adopted by Hegel.[1] But it was purged by the latter of the fantastic history in which it was originally tricked out; it was bent to the purposes of the conservative, not to say of the reactionary; and, deepened by the reasoned conviction of progress and the profound insight into the main currents of man's history, which we have already seen in his more speculative writings, it became inseparably linked with the Philosophy of History. Later writers have tried to improve on the effort of the master. But, in spite of obvious defects, *Die Philosophie der Geschichte* still remains a model, unsurpassed and unequalled.

Æsthetic theory.

As to the further developments of æsthetic theory, little is left to say. Fichte and Schelling, each in his own way, may be regarded as the theorists of the romantic movement, as it was shaped

[1] *Philosophie des Rechts*, 1821; *Philosophie der Geschichte*, published after his death.

by such men as the Schlegels and Tieck and Novalis. And it is easy to see how the philosophic egoism of the one and the irresponsible mysticism of the other —quite apart from all personal reasons, which, however, worked strongly in the same direction—naturally gave countenance to the carnival of caprice which broke loose on Germany during the romantic ferment. In particular, it may be noted that the conception of "irony" as the soul of imaginative art—a conception formulated by Friedrich Schlegel, and rapturously accepted by Tieck and others of his school—was a bastard growth of the philosophy of Fichte.[1] And it is a conception of which philosophy has no reason to be proud.

Hegel.

Very different was the achievement and influence of Hegel.[2] Nurtured on Greek art and Greek philosophy, it was impossible for him to accept the chaotic creations of the romantic brotherhood. And, if he has a bias, it is towards that side of contemporary poetry which was most antagonistic to romantic ideals; towards the "classical" revival of Goethe and Schiller; towards the remoteness of the *West-östlicher Divan* as against the passionate intensity of *Faust*. For all this, it remains true that, in art as in the more speculative aspects of his philosophy, the temper of Hegel is, in the wider and nobler sense, essentially romantic; and that he embodies, more

[1] See the numerous, and adoring, references to Fichte in the *Fragmente* of Novalis.

[2] The *Æsthetik*, like most of his works, is posthumous, put together from notes of the lectures delivered in the University of Berlin between 1818 and 1831.

completely than any other writer, that conception of reason, as an intrinsically creative faculty, which we have seen to lie at the very core of the romantic revolution. And nowhere did he apply this conception more fruitfully than in the theory of imaginative art. There the service which he rendered is beyond question. It is to have distinguished the functions of the several arts, and, at the same time, to have traced their growth from a common root. It is to have seized the essential moments in the historical development of each. It is to have held the balance, more evenly than any of his predecessors had done, between the form of art and the matter; to have brought art once more into connection with the vital realities of life without degrading it into their handmaid; to have fixed the place of art side by side with the other energies of man—with his impulse towards knowledge, action, and religion—as one of the abiding manifestations of the reason, the "idea," which works in and through them all.

Literary movement common to the whole race.

In leaving Germany, it is well to point out how evenly the literary genius of the period was distributed over the length and breadth of the land. Goethe came from the Rhineland, on the west; Kant and Herder from the Russian border, on the extreme east. Schiller, Schelling, and Hegel were natives of Suabia, on the south-west; Lessing and Fichte of the Lausitz, in the centre, towards the north-east. And, if we may include the musicians who are among the glories of the epoch,

the few gaps left are at once filled. Beethoven, born in the Rhine provinces, was ultimately of Flemish descent; Haydn and Mozart belonged to the Austrian provinces of the south-east. In this sense, no less than in those indicated at the beginning of the chapter, the romantic revival was, in the fullest measure, an awakening of the nation.

Consult the following, among other works: Scherer, *Geschichte der deutschen Litteratur* (3rd ed., 1885); Robertson, *History of German Literature* (1902); Julian Schmidt, *Geschichte des geistigen Lebens in Deutschland von Leibnitz bis auf Lessings Tod* (2 vols., 1862-64), and *Geschichte der deutschen Litteratur seit Lessings Tod* (3 vols., 1858); Hettner, *Litteraturgeschichte des 18^en Jahrhunderts* (6 vols., 4th ed., 1893-94), and *Die Romantische Schule in ihrem inneren Zusammenhang mit Goethe und Schiller* (1850); Brandes, *Hovedströmningr i det 19^de Aarhundredes Litteratur* (English Translation, 6 vols., 1901-5); Lewes, *Life of Goethe* (3rd ed., 1882; Düntzer, *Goethes Leben* (1850); Goethe, *Wahrheit und Dichtung, Annalen, Italienische Reise, Briefe an Frau v. Stein* (3 vols., 1848-51), *Briefwechsel mit Schiller* (2 vols., 3rd ed., 1870), *Briefe zwischen Goethe und Knebel* (2 vols., 1851), *Gespräche* (ed. Biedermann, 10 vols., 1889-96); Schiller, *Briefwechsel mit Körner* (4 vols., 1847), *Briefwechsel mit W. v. Humboldt* (2nd ed., 1876); Carlyle, *Life of Schiller* (1825); K. Fischer, *Schiller-Schriften* (2 vols., 1891-92), and *Lessing als Reformator der deutschen Litteratur* (1881); Haym, *Die Romantische Schule* (1870), and *Herder nach seinem Leben und seinen Werken dargestellt* (2 vols., 1877-85); Fr. Schlegel, *Briefe an A. W. Schlegel* (ed. Walzel, 1890); Holtei, *Briefe an Tieck* (4 vols., 1867); Heine, *Die Romantische Schule* (*Werke*, ed. Elster, vol. v.); Goschen, *George Joachim Göschen, Publisher and Printer* (2 vols., 1903), *Allgemeine deutsche Biographie* (50 vols., 1875-1905); Caird, *Philosophy of Kant* (1877).

CHAPTER III.

FRANCE AND ITALY.

LATIN COUNTRIES—FRANCE—CLASSICAL SURVIVALS: POETRY—DRAMA—NOVEL-REALISM — LA HARPE — THE TRANSITION: "LE DRAME"—TRAGEDY — INFLUENCE OF SHAKESPEARE — LETOURNEUR — DUCIS—COMEDY: BEAUMARCHAIS—FABRE D'EGLANTINE—TRAGEDY: M. J. CHÉNIER — LEMERCIER: TRAGEDY — HIS COMEDY — DESCRIPTIVE POETRY — FOREIGN INFLUENCES — THOMSON — SAINT-LAMBERT — DELILLE—FONTANES—PARNY—INFLUENCE OF ROUSSEAU—FLORIAN —MERCIER: AS CRITIC — AS DRAMATIST — SAINT-PIERRE — MISCELLANEOUS WRITERS — RAYNAL — BUFFON — BARTHÉLEMY — GRIMM—MADAME D'ÉPINAY — MADAME ROLAND — CONDORCET — JOURNALISM — SIEYÈS — DESMOULINS — ORATORY — TYRANNY OF NAPOLEON — ROMANCE — ANDRÉ CHÉNIER—'IDYLLES'—FRAGMENTS OF 'SUZANNE' AND 'HERMES' — LATER POETRY — PLACE OF CHÉNIER — MADAME DE STAËL — POLITICAL WRITINGS — 'CONSIDÉRATIONS' — 'DE LA LITTÉRATURE': ITS ORIGINALITY—ANTICIPATIONS OF ROMANCE—'DE L'ALLEMAGNE'—INSPIRATION TO BE DRAWN FROM GERMAN THOUGHT AND POETRY—EXILE—HER NOVELS—HER RELATION TO ROMANCE—CHATEAUBRIAND—HIS RELATION TO ROUSSEAU: 'RENÉ' —'ATALA,' AND LATER ROMANCES—'LE GÉNIE'—CHATEAUBRIAND AS CRITIC — HIS IMPORTANCE IN THE HISTORY OF ROMANCE—JOUBERT, SENANCOUR — JOSEPH DE MAISTRE — HIS IDEA OF THE STATE—OF SOVEREIGNTY: 'LE PAPE'—HIS RELATION TO BURKE —REACTION TOWARDS CLASSICISM — ITALY — SOCIETÀ DEL CAFFÈ —ROMANCE: CESAROTTI — 'FILOSOFIA DELLE LINGUE' — BERTOLA —A. VERRI — CLASSICISM: PARINI — LATER ROMANCE: CASTI — I. PINDEMONTE—MONTI—'ARISTODEMO'—G. PINDEMONTE: JACOBIN DRAMAS — FOSCOLO: 'JACOPO ORTIS' — ALFIERI — HIS GENIUS IN CLASSICAL TRAGEDY—GREEK AND HISTORICAL SUBJECTS—ROMANTIC ELEMENTS IN HIS PLAYS—SUBORDINATE TO THE CLASSICAL—HIS COMEDIES—HIS AUTOBIOGRAPHY.

THE Latin countries were far more deeply in bondage to the classical tradition than either Germany or England; and it was much later before they were captured by the romantic movement. Accordingly, a slighter treatment will here suffice for our purpose; and the history of the two countries to be considered in this chapter will naturally fall under two heads: the survival of the classical tradition on the one hand, on the other the first beginnings of the movement towards romance.

Latin countries.

The place of honour, it need hardly be said, belongs to France. It was here that the classical tradition had cast the deepest roots. It was here that the romantic reaction was most vividly declared. Over the writers who can fairly be said to have followed the classical worship, pure and undefiled, it is unnecessary to linger. The breath of life had already departed from their cult; and, since Rousseau, the vital tendencies were in the direction of romance. Alike in poetry, the drama, the novel, and the more miscellaneous forms of literature, new influences were astir; and from these influences even the most hardened classicists were unable to keep themselves entirely free.

France.

In poetry it is perhaps enough to mention Gilbert (1751-1780), whose satires (*Le poète malheureux*, *Le Dix-huitième Siècle*, and others), largely inspired by hatred of the "philosophers," have a vigorous eloquence, moulded on the approved classical models. Yet even he intersperses his attacks on Voltaire and Diderot with sneers at

Classical survivals—Poetry.

Boileau and other legislators of Parnassus; even he is infected by the romantic faith that the function of poetry is to "paint"; and in his lyrical pieces writes with a sincerity of religious fervour which is still more decisively opposed to the classical routine. It would be indecent entirely to pass over Lebrun (1729-1807), the most inveterate, and it must be added the most servile, practitioner of the Ode, which he manipulated with all the cold fury traditional in that form of poetic exercise. In his own day, he went by the surname of Pindar; now he is hardly remembered except by his versification of Barère's carmagnole on the loss of the Vengeur.

Drama.

In the Drama it is doubtful whether even this degree of vitality remained with the classical tradition. Plays framed on the classical model doubtless continued to be written, and written in plenty. But with rare exceptions—the *Philoctète* of La Harpe (1783) is perhaps the most notable—the salt had gone out of them, and they are all now hopelessly forgotten. Since the *Sémiramis* of Voltaire (1748), the prevailing current had flowed in other channels; from that time onward all the marked tragedies had been fused more or less completely with romantic elements. And Tragedy itself bade fair to yield the palm to that mixed form, so dear to Europe in the latter half of the eighteenth century, which is known to French critics as *Le Drame*.

With the novel there is, from the nature of the case, more difficulty of classification. Born with the

first stirrings of the romantic instinct, the novel was romantic in its very essence. All that remains, therefore, is to distinguish between the two streams of tradition; between that which came down from Le Sage, through Marivaux and Crébillon fils on the one hand, and that which traces its source to Rousseau, and through him to Prévost, upon the other. It is with the former alone—as that which, by courtesy, may be called classical—that we are here concerned. Under this head it is sufficient to mention two names: those of Choderlos de Laclos (1741-1803) and Restif de la Bretonne (1734-1806). Both men survive by one book; both have suffered grievously from the supposed immorality of their work; and both with some injustice. *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* of the former (1782) is certainly a most repulsive story. But, apart from one or two passages, it cannot fairly be called licentious; and the power with which the two leading characters, monuments of cold-blooded wantonness, are drawn is undeniable. There is probably no book which gives so vivid a picture of the social corruptions of the years immediately preceding the Revolution. *Le Paysan Perverti* of Restif (1776) can hardly lay claim to the same distinction. In literary skill it is infinitely inferior; and that inferiority is the more marked by the comparison which the author himself challenges with the *Paysan Parvenu* of Marivaux. But we are left with the impression that, at bottom, Restif was possessed of surprising originality. Critics have pointed out that the villain of his piece is an

Novel-realism.

anticipation of Balzac's Vautrin. And they might have added that, alike in his unsparing realism and in his design of "anatomising" the heart of man, "le moi humain," as formed by his social surroundings, he goes a long way towards forestalling the methods of *La Comédie humaine.*[1] And the same might be said of Pigault-Lebrun (1753-1835). It has been said that both Laclos and Restif owe much to the influence of Rousseau. That, however, would appear to be a misleading affiliation; and, at the most, it refers to Rousseau only as he was in the most outspoken pages of the *Confessions.* The real debt of both, in incident as well as method, is to Richardson: Laclos working largely on the model of *Clarissa*, and Restif on that of *Pamela.* But, when all is said, both writers stand apart from all that is vital to the romantic movement. Their tendency, especially that of Restif, is towards realism rather than romance.

Of miscellaneous writers, the only one who calls for notice is La Harpe (1739-1803). And here again we

[1] The passage is worth quoting. It occurs in the Preface to *Le Drame de la Vie* (1793), an extraordinary chain of connected plays in five volumes; and it refers to that work and another, *Monsieur Nicolas.* "Voici l'ouvrage le plus extraordinaire qui ait encore paru. Il est unique dans son genre. Publier la vie d'un homme; le mettre en drame, avec une vérité qui le fait agir au lieu de parler. . . . Je ne déguise rien, mais je ne fais qu'esquisser; au lieu que *M. Nicolas* est une anatomie complète du moi humain; non sèche et métaphysique, mais historique, variée comme la nature. On y verra la nature humaine démontée et mise sous verre, pour être examinée, considérée, scrutée par les philosophes et les lecteurs." One might almost fancy this, the fanfaronnade included, to have come from the pen of Balzac. But the promise is hardly carried out by the performance.

La Harpe.

are met with some variance of opinion. La Harpe has passed into a byword, as the oracle of classical bigotry. But whoever will be at the pains to turn over his interminable *Lycée*, which consists of lectures delivered in the closing years of the old century and the beginning of the new, will see that even this feather must be torn from his cap. No doubt, he has a strong bias towards the classical conventions. Yet, both in theory and in practice, he hedges at every step;[1] and it is almost a relief when the true man leaps out to attack Rousseau and Diderot with all the truculence at his command.[2] This, however, is not on grounds of form, but of matter; not as literary heretics, but as "sophists." In matters purely literary, La Harpe represents, so far as an ingrained pedant could represent, the more liberal mind of classical respectability; he has certainly little of the bitterness which the romantic defiance of 1830 provoked in his successors. And this, on the whole, is typical of French criticism as it was during the period under our consideration. At the beginning of the period (1775-1789) the Revolution had already cast its shadow

[1] *E.g.*, "C'est depuis Voltaire surtout que l'on a employé si souvent ce mot, *goût*, dans un sens absolu; mais on en a abusé beaucoup, en voulant trop le séparer du génie et du talent, dont il est cependant une partie essentielle et nécessaire."—*Lycée*, t. i., p. 12 (*Panthéon Lit.*) Contrast the defence of "les règles," which occurs two pages earlier. The whole work is full of these compromises. See the remarks on Dante, Milton, Shakespeare, Lope de Vega—ib., pp. 7, 23, 432; on Saint-Lambert—ib., p. 595; and on *Werther*, t. ii., p. 738.

[2] Ib., t. ii., pp. 834-971.

before it. The political, moral, and intellectual issues which it raised were of such vast importance as to throw all else into the shade. And the same remained true when the storm had passed, and the work of reconstruction was begun (1795-1805). The literary issues stirred by the work of Chateaubriand passed comparatively without notice. It was as "restorer of the altars" that he was, in the first instance, either defended or assailed. It is manifest that this gave an enormous advantage to the party of literary innovation. Heresies, which a few years earlier or later would certainly have been challenged, now escaped almost without protest under cover of more sanguinary disputes.

The transition —Le Drame.

We pass to the writers who display more or less markedly the workings of the romantic spirit; those who form the transition from Voltaire and the classicists on the one hand to André Chénier, Chateaubriand, and Madame de Staël upon the other. Among these writers, two groups stand out in sharp relief: the first, that formed by the descriptive poets; the second, the direct disciples of Rousseau. Besides these, we have to consider the dramatists who, now as ever, filled the largest space in the eyes of the French public. It is with the last that we begin. In Tragedy, or what may pass for such, the first thing to strike us is the survival of the influence of Diderot. His immediate successor, Sedaine (1719-1797), had indeed crowned his work with *Le Philosophe sans le savoir* (1765) before our period begins. But he still continued to write romantic operas, among

which, significantly enough, is one on *Aucassin et Nicolette* (1782). And, much to the rage of Voltaire, he even ventured on a set tragedy in prose—*Maillard, ou Paris sauvé*—which, thanks to the opposition it provoked, was not published until the year before the Revolution (1788). What again could be more startling than to find the essentially gay genius of Beaumarchais devoted, both at the beginning and end of his career, to the composition of what he himself indifferently calls "tragédies bourgeoises," or "comédies larmoyantes"? *Eugénie* (1767), *Les deux Amis* (1770), *La Mère coupable*, an execrable continuation of *Figaro* (1792-97), have little or no intrinsic worth. But they at least serve to show that the French Drama was still moving on the lines which the great critic and improvisatore had laid down. The same appears from Saurin's *Beverley*, an adaptation of Moore's *Gamester*, and Mercier's *Jenneval*, an adaptation of *George Barnwell* (both in 1768), together with many other Plays by the latter. But Saul also was destined to be among the prophets. And perhaps the surest proof that *Le Père de Famille* still continued to be a power is to be found in the surrender of La Harpe; in his *Barneveldt*, a thin disguise for the importunate *Barnwell;* still more in his *Mélanie* (printed 1770, first acted 1793).[1] Here we have the author of *Philoctète*,

[1] In the original version, and presumably in the performance of 1793, La Harpe, then (as Chateaubriand calls him) "révolutionnaire effréné," had sharpened all his weapons against the Church. For this reason the Play was vehemently praised by Voltaire: "L'Europe attend *Mélanie*." In 1802, when he was as violent on the other side, he issued a revised version in which, so far as might be, he put buttons on his foils.

the reputed high-priest of classicism, deliberately taking his theme from a burning question of the day—the whole drama is an impassioned plea against the iniquity of monastic compulsion—and decisively ranging himself among the advocates of domestic tragedy. We have him also adopting, on occasion, a versification which, in disregard of the cæsura, forestalls the romanticists of 1830. These things are alone almost sufficient to destroy his reputation as a "classic." They are sufficient also to prove the change which had come over the spirit of French Tragedy.

Tragedy.

The same change, though in other directions, appears in the tragedies of De Belloy (1727-1775) and of Lemierre (1725-1793), neither of whom, however, falls strictly within our period. The former, who is chiefly known for *La Siége de Calais* (1765)—so highly praised by Lessing, so offensive to Voltaire—habitually turned to national and, by preference, to patriotic subjects, thus opening a vein which was to be vigorously worked by the romanticists in his own country and in others. And it is significant that a later tragedy, *Gabrielle de Vergy*, printed in 1770, but first performed after his death (1777), dramatises one of the most terrible stories of mediæval chivalry. Lemierre, like Voltaire, is eclectic and cosmopolitan in his choice of subjects; but in his love of startling incident and vivid effects of the stage he shows himself no less romantic than De Belloy. And it is a striking proof of the change now passing over the taste of the French public that neither *Guillaume Tell* (1766) nor

La Veuve de Malabar (1770) won much success until the apple and the suttee were brought bodily upon the stage—feats of daring accomplished respectively in 1780 and 1786, and denounced with pious horror by the orthodox editors of *Le Théâtre Français.*

Influence of Shakespeare.

But the clearest sign of the romantic dawn is perhaps to be seen in the repeated efforts made during this period to naturalise Shakespeare. The two names most prominently connected with this endeavour — but by no means the only ones — are those of Letourneur (1736-1788) and Ducis (1733-1816).

Letourneur.

Even before the middle of the century, attempts had been made in this direction. Voltaire, bitter as the thought must have been to him in after years, had led the way.[1] Prévost followed suit (1738). Their work, however, was mainly critical or appreciative. And it was only by translation that first-hand knowledge could be given. This was supplied in 1745, when two volumes of translation, shortly to be followed by two more, were published by La Place, an analysis of certain plays not included in the translation being added, after the fashion set by Prévost. Certainly the version of La Place left much to be desired, as well in accuracy as completeness; and it was to make good these deficiencies that Letourneur, aided by two others, took the field (1776). Their translation threw all previous efforts into the shade. It was strikingly faithful, it was complete, and it was patronised by most of the notables of Europe.

[1] *Lettres Philosophiques*, 1733-34.

Among the subscribers were the kings of France and England; a present, past, and future Prime Minister of France (Turgot, Choiseul, Necker); the greatest actor of the age; two of its most prominent philosophers (Holbach and Diderot);[1] finally—and this was the unkindest cut of all—D'Argental, the "guardian angel" of Voltaire, and the Empress Catherine, the supreme goddess of his idolatry. What wonder that Voltaire was stung to a frenzy of righteous indignation? He was wounded in his literary religion no less than in his vanity; he was wounded in the very house of his friend. The old warrior at once sprang to arms and prepared a manifesto which was designed to cover "that clown Shakespeare and that merry-andrew Letourneur" with ridicule and contempt. The letter was read by d'Alembert, on whose lips it lost nothing of its force, before a public meeting of the Academy (August 25, 1776).[2] For the moment, the triumph of "the good cause" was complete; the fire and wit of the Patriarch carried all before them. An English boy, unabashed by the general merriment, was heard calling for a hooter "to hiss that Voltaire";[3]

[1] Compare Diderot's letter to Tronchin, Dec. 18, 1776: "Ce Shakespeare était un terrible mortel; ce n'est pas le gladiateur antique, ni l'Apollon du Belvidère; mais c'est l'informe et grossier Colosse de Notre-Dame; Colosse Gothique, mais entre les jambes duquel nous passerions tous." Quoted by M. Jusserand, from whose *Shakespeare en France* I have drawn freely throughout this paragraph and the next.

[2] See Voltaire, *Correspondance Générale*, t. xii.; *Correspondance de d'Alembert*, t. ii.: Letters of July 19, 30; Aug. 15, 27; Oct. 15, 1776. For his Letter to the Academy, *Œuvres*, t. xlix., pp. 309-334.

[3] La Harpe, *Corr. Litt.*, i. 419.

but Mrs Montague, who was there to grace the triumph of the enemy, was forced to submit in silence. Yet to the end Voltaire was haunted by a fear that the foe would rally his forces; and his alarms were not without foundation. The list of subscribers to the "abomination of desolation" increased with each successive volume; it was swelled by the names of several among Voltaire's personal friends. Even some of the Academicians—for instance Suard, Mercier, and Sedaine—went over to the "drunken savage." It would appear that France as a whole still wavered in the balance. The worst, however, was yet to come. When Voltaire died two years later, the choice of the Academy fell on Ducis for his successor. The high-priest of Racine was replaced by the most ardent of the worshippers of Shakespeare. The scene at the reception of the new member must have been deeply mortifying to the faithful d'Alembert. Ducis adroitly threw stress upon the romantic innovations of his mercurial predecessor. The obscure Abbé, who was put up to answer him, prudently forgot to mention the unrecanted heresies of the neophyte; and, after some aimless babble about the comparatively classical and innocent *Œdipe* (1778), launched into an attack on the irreligion of Voltaire. For the causes which the departed patriarch had at heart it was a decisive check. The honours of the sitting remained with the courteous but impenitent Ducis.

The long life of Ducis was consumed in the attempt to make Shakespeare—the "god of the drama," as Letourneur called him—at home on the French stage.

Ducis.

One after another all the tragedies of the arch-romanticist were adapted with this object, and an incursion was even made into the Histories. The dates are as follows: *Hamlet*, 1769; *Romeo*, 1772; *Lear*, 1783; *Macbeth*, 1784; *Othello*, 1792; *Jean Sans-Terre* (*ou La Mort d'Arthur*), 1791. After 1792 the author held his hand, on the sufficient ground that tragedies enough were being enacted at his door. But he was busy in retouching, altering, recasting almost to the end of his days. The fruit of these long labours is a strange hybrid, but one in which the romantic inset prevails over the classical stock on which it is so ingeniously grafted. The worst defects of the classical model doubtless remain untouched. The bulk of the action is transacted behind the scene; the poetic diction, the avoidance of the "mot propre," is not seldom grotesque; the speeches are rather declamatory than dramatic; the characters are on stilts. The unity of time, it may be added, though not that of place, is sedulously observed. On the other hand, the appeal to sentiment—or, as the author calls it, to the "feelings of pity and terror," in particular the terrors of the supernatural and the sense of horror—is remorselessly worked; so remorselessly that, in more than one case, the audience rose in revolt, and could only be appeased by the substitution of a happy ending, which Ducis, even without such pressure, was not unwilling to supply. "Allow me," seems to have been his argument, "to draw as many tears and shudders as *I* please during nine-tenths of my piece,

and I will give as many smiles as *you* please at the close." Thus, in *Romeo and Juliet*, Montague, a second Ugolino, being imprisoned by Capulet, has devoured all his children except Romeo. But, to redress the balance, Juliet awakes from her trance at the right moment, and the play ends in sunshine and orange-blossoms. Like changes were made at the end of *Hamlet*, *Lear*, and *Othello*. It was only by such concessions that Shakespeare could be made palatable to a French audience. Thanks to them, all these plays, *Macbeth* excepted, seem to have been received with great applause. They were performed under Napoleon, who had always a weakness for the high-flown, in himself and others. They remained in the repertory of the French stage until the high tide of romance had begun to ebb.

Comedy: Beaumarchais.

One dramatist alone remains to mention, and he is among the strangest figures in the history of literature. This is Beaumarchais (1732-1799), whose works stand entirely apart from the general tendencies of his time. Three of his plays, indeed, as we have seen, belong to the order of "sombre" or "serious" drama. But they are an unhappy concession to the fashion of the day, and in no way represent the vital qualities of his genius. The real man is to be sought in his two comedies, *Le Barbier de Séville* (1775) and, far more, in *Le Mariage de Figaro* (1784). The scene of both is laid in Spain; their outward machinery to some extent drawn from the drama of Spain. But in the later one, at any rate, the eye of the author is

fixed upon France, and the spirit of the comedy is essentially French. *Figaro* is the most sparkling, but bitterest, satire of French society, as it was on the eve of the Revolution. And it must be confessed that the purely dramatic ends of the piece are at least once, in the famous soliloquy of the hero, sacrificed to the overmastering fury of the satirist. But the blows are so well planted, they reach so far beyond the mere abuses of the moment, that it is hard to regret this; and throughout the rest of the play the dramatic proprieties are maintained with a skill and force beyond reach of cavil. It has been objected that the whole comedy, in particular the last act, is too much a game of hide-and-seek. This is only to say that it is—doubtless, in rather an extreme form—a comedy of intrigue. And the incidents are in themselves so amusing, they are so ingeniously contrived to bring out the conflicting characters of the agents, that the criticism falls to the ground. It cannot, indeed, be maintained that Beaumarchais gave an entirely new turn to the Comedy of his age, such as Molière had given to that of France, and the Restoration dramatists to that of England, in the preceding century. But it may safely be asserted that, with the reservation already indicated, he returned to the best traditions of his great predecessor. In his invincible valet he created a type as true to nature as it is dramatically effective. And in Chérubin, without overstepping the appropriate bounds of Comedy, he touched a deep spring of pathos and poetry. The glorious melodies of Mozart merely bring to the sur-

face what from the first was latent in the creation of Beaumarchais. And all this is the very soul of romance.

The Revolution was singularly barren in dramatic as in other kinds of literary talent; and the Empire, with its "decennial prizes" and its leaden censorship, was infinitely worse. Under the former head we may content ourselves with pointing to the work of Fabre d'Eglantine (1750-1794) and of Joseph Chénier, the younger brother of André (1764-1811). Of the former little is to be said. His one title to fame is *Philinte* (1790), which he had the temerity to conceive and announce as a continuation of *Le Misanthrope*. Naturally no play could stand the comparison thus challenged, and the author put himself further in the wrong by entirely distorting the character of his hero. The main theme of the play is as serious as that of Molière's masterpiece, and it lacks the relief given by the satire of the marquises and the high comedy of Arsinoé and Célimène. For all that, it is a striking performance; and in its seriousness, as well as in its obligations to Rousseau, it carries on the romantic strain which we have noticed in the earlier part of the period. Fabre, it may be recorded, was joint-author of the Revolutionary Calendar, and was executed on the same day as Danton. There is a tradition that, on his arrest, a play, directed against Robespierre and the Jacobins, was seized and destroyed.

Fabre d'Eglantine.

The work of Chénier, in spite of its obvious

defects, is of greater importance. More than any other writer, he represents the passions, we may even say the aspirations, of the revolutionary era. Author of the spirited *Chant du Départ* (1794), which is second only to the *Marseillaise* of Rouget de Lisle (1792), he was the official poet of the Convention at the Feast of the Supreme Being and other revolutionary celebrations. But his main strength was thrown into the drama. And here, on literary as well as historical grounds, he deserves more recognition than he has commonly received. "A pupil of Voltaire, and none of the best," he has been called; but the phrase barely does him justice. In *Henry VIII.* (1791) and *Timoléon*, a classical tragedy with a chorus (1795), he certainly falls immeasurably below his model. And the construction of his plays is generally weak. But it may be doubted whether Voltaire ever wrote anything so stirring as single scenes to be found in his earlier dramas: the "scene of the harangues" in *Caius Gracchus* (1792), and the blessing of the swords by the Cardinal of Lorraine in *Charles IX.* (1788; first performed November 1789). The latter, in particular, is not only supremely effective as melodrama; it is declamation of a very high order. No wonder that the audience of 1789 was wrought by it to a frenzy of excitement.[1] In two of his plays, *Calas* (1790) and *Fénélon* (1793), Chénier strikes into domestic tragedy after the fashion of *Mélanie*. The

Tragedy: M. J. Chénier.

[1] There is a lively description of an early performance (Jan. 1790) in Baggesen's *Labyrinthen Værker*, t. xi., pp. 58, 59.

imitation is no better, nor perhaps is it much worse, than the model. But the choice of subject, particularly in the case of *Calas*, is significant. Altogether it must be admitted that the classicism of Chénier is tempered, to a degree more than ordinary, by cross currents of romance. He translated Gray's *Elegy*, it is true with a certain coyness of the Englishman's romantic detail—the "beetle's droning flight," for instance, vanishes; and on occasion he speaks of Shakespeare with an enthusiasm which would have enraged Voltaire, and must almost have satisfied Ducis. Of romanticism in his own contemporaries, Chateaubriand and Madame de Staël, he was less tolerant.

Much the same tradition, but with an added touch of emphasis, was carried forward under the Consulate and Empire. Of this period the one representative worth mentioning is Lemèrcier (1771-1840); and it says much that, though his best tragedies belong to the years immediately before and after 1800, not one of them was performed until the fall of Napoleon and of the rigid censorship which he plumed himself on maintaining. After making his bow to the public in a purely classical tragedy (*Agamemnon*, 1797), Lemercier plunged boldly into romance. The scene of *Ophis* (1799) is laid in Egypt, and it is clearly written under the strongest possible influence of *Sémiramis*. A large part of the play is performed in the royal vault; but the disciple betters the instruction of the master by raising the dead to life; while the king, thus restored to power, concludes the piece, like a

Lemercier: Tragedy.

good citizen of the Directory, by resigning a "vain crown" and seeking happiness in obscurity. The only other tragedy which calls for recognition is *Charlemagne* (written 1800-1, first performed 1816), and that, perhaps, more from incidental circumstances than from the intrinsic merits of the piece. There is one scene which is manifestly inspired by the pleading of Arthur with Hubert in *King John*—an inspiration which the writer again sought in *Richard III. et Jane Shore* (1824). It is said, moreover, that Napoleon prohibited the play on the ground that, instead of relating a conspiracy against the life of his "predecessor Charlemagne," it ought to end with his coronation. But it is only fair to record that Lemercier himself gives a different account of the matter. "I was ordered," he writes, "to stage it as it now stands; but I refused to obey, having no wish that literature should aid the designs of policy at the moment when the Consulate was about to exalt itself into an hereditary empire. This sacrifice," he continues, "lost me the advantage of being the first to reopen the choice of *national* subjects, among which I was already prepared to place *Clovis* and *Saint Louis*." To these were subsequently added *Frédégonde* and *Charles VI.*, not to mention *Les Martyrs de Souli*, a drama on the insurrection of Greece, which appeared towards the end of his career (1825), and belongs to the general movement that culminated in *Les Orientales* of Hugo.

The same romantic leaning, though in a very

different manner, appears in his one comedy, *Pinto* (1800). Here again an historical incident, the revolt of Portugal from Spain, forms the theme of the dramatist. But, with an instinct that might be paralleled from the later history of Romance, the nobler side of the enterprise is kept deliberately in the background, the interest being ingeniously centred in the personal motives and intrigues which, it is said, are commonly interwoven with a revolution, and which, in Lemercier's hands, give rise to some excellent comedy, recalling, if somewhat faintly, the quips and agility of Figaro. Nor, though its connection with the Drama is somewhat nominal, must *La Panhypocrisiade* (1819) be forgotten. It is a scathing satire—*Comédie épique* is the description on the title-page—against the hypocrisy with which the world is governed. Charles V. and Luther, the papal court and Francis I., are all brought beneath the poet's lash. In the scope of the satire and its scene, which is cast in the lower regions, as well as in the bold mingling of drama and narrative, it is hard not to see an anticipation of the later work of Hugo. But, with all his varied energies, the main field of Lemercier was tragedy. And here the words above quoted mark his abiding place as the precursor of French Romance. With Joseph Chénier he must share the credit of reviving the historical drama, which played so large a part in the ferment of 1830; and he is less hampered than Chénier by the classical tradition. It was not altogether inappropriate that his successor, as member

His comedy.

of the Academy, should be no other than the arch-heretic Hugo.

This concludes our account of the French Drama. The determining factor in its history is the spirit of seriousness which had come over the "gay nation." The first result of this was that, with one single and brilliant exception, comedy had for the moment almost ceased to count. The second, that tragedy had to a large extent given way to the "serious drama"; while it was further modified by the introduction of romantic themes and incidents, of which Voltaire in his later plays had set the fashion, but which was now extended, with none of Voltaire's reserves, under the very different inspiration of Shakespeare. A certain return towards classicism is observable in Chénier, as it is in all the products of the revolutionary ferment; but even he has many of the characteristics of romance.

Descriptive poetry.

The same story is repeated in the poetry of the epoch, and in language no less emphatic. In no country does descriptive poetry play so large a part during this period as in France; and the descriptions, it need hardly be said, go back in the last resort to Thomson for their inspiration. It should be added, however, that the influence of Germany — in this instance, of Gessner and Haller — blends itself with that of England; and, what is yet more important, that descriptive poetry is universally assumed to go hand in hand with didactic. Thus the way is opened for yet another stream of influence—that of

the English moralists, and, in particular, of Young. And it is this predominance of the moral note which gives its distinctive tone to the descriptive poetry of France, as compared with that of Germany or England. In the latter countries the two kinds of poetry are, in some measure, held apart. In France they are uniformly blended, and the moralist commonly has the upper hand of the painter.

Foreign influences.

The influence of Thomson first openly declared itself in 1759, the date of a translation of the *Seasons* by Madame Bontemps. But it must have begun to work some years earlier; for Saint-Lambert's poem, though not published till the end of the next decade, is known to have been on the stocks some "fifteen or twenty years before." Ossian became known in France almost immediately on the appearance of Macpherson's adaptation (1760-63).[1] But no French version was issued until that of Letourneur (1777),[2] who also translated the *Night Thoughts* of Young (1769), two significant additions to the heresies which must be laid at the door of the worshipper of Shakespeare. One other translation may here be mentioned, more because it betokens a general revolution of literary taste than from any direct bearing

[1] A few fragments from Macpherson's first volume were translated by Turgot (*Œuvres*, ix. 141-151), apparently soon after their appearance (1760). But I am unable to find the exact date. It may be mentioned that Turgot also translated pieces of Gessner and Klopstock.

[2] A later translation, in verse, is by Baour-Lormian (1801). Adaptations in verse will also be found in the poems of Joseph Chénier.

on our subject. This is the version of the *Inferno* by Rivarol (1785), which followed a *Life* of Dante, with a detailed account of his works, by Chabanon (1773).[1] Considering the alternate irony and contempt which Voltaire launched at the great Italian, and which it is to be feared that Goethe would have been ready to echo, it is manifest that these things have their significance. They mark the beginnings of that great reversal of literary opinion, of which the abiding monument is *De l'Allemagne* of Madame de Staël.

These influences, notably that of Thomson, were not long in making themselves felt. From 1760 onwards we have an uninterrupted stream of descriptive poems, some of them betraying further the prompting of Young, Gray, and other English disciples of the school of melancholy. Of these, perhaps the most important are *Les quatre Saisons, ou Les Georgiques françaises* of Bernis (1763), *Les quatres Parties du Jour* by the same author (1769), *Le Matin et le Soir* (1764) and *Les Saisons* (1768) by Saint-Lambert; finally, the long list of poems by Delille, beginning with his translation of the *Georgics* (1769) and stretching on through half the Consulate and Empire. We may confine ourselves to the work of Saint-Lambert and Delille.

Thomson.

Saint-Lambert (1716-1803), who frankly admits his debt to Germany and England, announces his intention of giving "pictures rather than descriptions."

[1] The welcome which Grimm gave to both is very noticeable. *Corr. Litt.*, ix. 22; xiv. 293.

This laudable desire is unfortunately by no means fulfilled. Throughout, when not moralising —and he explicitly asserts that a French poet, writing for a public "to which nature is either unknown or indifferent," is bound to moralise — he works in the purest vein of description. Sheep-shearing, fishing, shooting, the hunt, the vintage, even the joys of the stage and of private reading, all come in for their turn. And though now and again a really fine line—for instance, that which describes the rocks swept down by the swollen river in *L'Automne*—is thrown in, it must be confessed that the general effect is monotonous; and that, neither in fidelity of detail nor in freshness of spirit, is the scholar comparable to his English tutor. In one respect, however, the positions are reversed. Birds may be "le peuple ailé des bois," the "plumy people" of Thomson; and the signs of the sky may be "les promesses d'Éole." But, on the whole, there is far less of this "glossy, unfeeling diction" in the disciple than the master; and this must be counted to him for righteousness. It is rather curious that, after casting some scorn in his preface on the sentimental episodes of Thomson—those episodes which Wordsworth declared to have made the fortune of the *Seasons* — Saint-Lambert should sprinkle his pages with stories precisely of the same type, but yet more heavily loaded with sentiment. It may be added that the Tales and Fables appended to *Les Saisons* betray, like them, the sentiment and the romantic leanings of the author. The former go to the Red Indians and

Saint-Lambert.

Jamaica for their scenery; the latter turn to the East, and are, in some cases, based on those of Sadi.

Delille.

Delille (1738-1813) in his own day passed for a great poet. No one would make that claim for him at the present time. But he remains the most representative poet of the last years of the old order, and, in many ways, of the Directory and the Empire. His chief works are *Les Jardins* (1782), *Les trois Règnes* (animal, vegetable, and mineral), *L'Homme des Champs* (1800), *Le Malheur et la Pitié* (1803), and *L'Imagination* (1806). Besides these, he made translations, or what by courtesy may be called such, of the *Georgics* (1769), the *Æneid* (1804), the *Eclogues* (1806), and *Paradise Lost* (1805). His original works have the ordinary merits and defects of their class, and he avowedly follows Saint-Lambert in marrying the descriptive to the didactic. His distinguishing mark is the extreme—not to say fatal—smoothness of his versification, which caused Grimm to pronounce him, and probably with justice, the most harmonious of all poets since Racine; though he maliciously barbed the compliment by applying to his music the not altogether flattering term *ramage*. And it is not surprising to find that this smoothness of flow goes hand in hand with an equal "glossiness" of diction, a constant effort—loudly proclaimed in theory, habitually maintained in practice—to "embellish with poetic colours the objects of nature, the methods of the various arts,"—the sportsman's gun becomes "le tube, image du tonnerre,"—"the precepts of morality

and the sweet labours of country life." With this difference, Delille covers much the same ground as his predecessor, Saint-Lambert. Fishing, the hunt, the storm, the shooting-party, the very joys of manuring, do duty for the twentieth time; while "le lotto du grand oncle, et le wisk des grands-pères" and other social distractions play a larger part with the diminutive abbé, who was nothing if not a ladies' man, than with the soldier who successfully disputed the loves both of Voltaire and Rousseau. Like Saint-Lambert, again, he intersperses his descriptions with sentimental episodes,[1] and, like him, he draws largely upon the English poets, particularly Goldsmith.[2] On the other hand, and this applies especially to his later years, he is apt to go more widely afield in search of colours for his pallet; as Chateaubriand sarcastically remarks, "He naturalised my wild flowers in his various French gardens, and set himself to cool my fiery wine in the cold water of his transparent spring."[3] From the gardens, French or exotic, it is a relief to turn to the one poem in which Delille consented to speak from his heart. This is *Le Malheur et la Pitie*—an assault on the excesses of the Revolution, and, in particular, on the harsh treatment of the emigrants and clergy. It is possible to disagree with every word of this lamentation, and yet to feel that the

[1] The whole of one book of *L'Imagination* is taken up with a story based on the wreck of the Antelope.

[2] See *L'Homme des Champs*, Book I., which contains a rather barefaced adaptation of Goldsmith's Schoolmaster and Parson.

[3] Chateaubriand, *Mémoires*, ii. 138.

author has here opened a far purer source of poetry than when he was cataloguing all the royal pleasaunces from China to Peru, from the gardens of Alcinous to those of Rheinsberg, Wilhelmshöhe, and Park Place.

Fontanes.

With the descriptive poets, though in a place apart, we may mention Fontanes (1757-1821), the other representative poet of the Empire and, with many reserves, its official mouthpiece in things literary and intellectual. In a moment of weakness, Sainte-Beuve hailed this writer as the herald of the new era, but he subsequently repented, and dethroned the idol he had set up. There can be no doubt that the later estimate is the true one. From the descriptive poets, as has been said, he stands somewhat apart. In a certain sense, he is in advance of them. He has more feeling; he has deeper reflection; he has a truer sense of what poetry can accomplish.[1] But the form of his poetry and, in later years, its habitual subjects also seem to take us backward rather than forward. It is marred by an excess of reserve and self-restraint; it is too deliberately classical in its intention; it lacks the fire, the movement, and the colour of inspiration. In all these respects, even Delille, in his better moments, has a truer claim to the title of precursor than Fontanes. Neither of them enters into the reckoning with André Chénier. As a critic, however, he deserves our gratitude. In spite of his classical leanings

[1] His best pieces are probably *Le Jour des Morts* and *La Chartreuse de Paris*; both are early works.

he was among the first to recognise the greatness of Chateaubriand, of whose "barbarism he was a passionate admirer, and whose language he understood, though he could not speak it." Both *Le Génie du Christianisme* and *Atala* owed much to his advice. It was he, for instance, who insisted that the discourse of the Père Aubry must be entirely recast.[1]

Parny.

One poet still remains: Parny (1753-1814), the author of glowing love-poems to "Eléanore," and of *La Guerre des Dieux*. It is by the former that he takes place in the romantic revival; the latter, a highly irreverent but extremely clever satire on Christianity and all its works, is of the purest eighteenth century. The love poems strike a new vein, both in their spirit and their setting. Written in the tropics, they have something of the glow of the tropical sky, the heat and passion of the tropical temperament. They do not pretend to aim high; but what they do attempt, they perform with an easy mastery which more serious writers might pardonably envy. During the ten years or so which preceded the Revolution they were, as Chateaubriand says, on everybody's lips; and that was due not merely to the subject, but to the halo of romantic novelty which he cast around it.[2] These were the main achievements of the author.

[1] Chateaubriand, *Mémoires*, ii. 123, 124; 189.

[2] In this connection, it is right to mention Bertin (1752-1790). Like Parny, he was a native of the tropics, and his poetry has much of the same tropical glow. On the whole, it is probably inferior to that of Parny; but in one piece (*El.* III. ii.) he may be thought to rise even higher. His *Élégies* were published in 1780.

In his more frivolous poems he is, from the nature of the case, nothing more than an easy versifier. In his burlesque *Guerre des Dieux anciens et modernes* (1799), quite apart from the offence which the choice of such a subject was bound to give, he is certainly unequal. Yet it must be admitted that the satire not seldom strikes home; and, as condensing the intellectual atmosphere of the later phases of the Revolution, it has an importance which has been unduly overlooked. Much of his later poetry—for instance, *Les Rosecroix* (1807), a violently romantic epic on the times of Saint Dunstan, in which invading Danes play the part that ought, by rights, to have been played by invading French—is incredibly bad.

We turn to the group of writers who, in an exceptional degree, represent the influence of Rousseau. That influence, it need hardly be said, was by far the most fruitful at work during the whole of this period; and, in the larger sense, it may be said to have leavened the whole mass of which we have treated. But, in a more special sense, it inspired a band of writers who were proud to claim Rousseau as their master, and some of whom lived in constant intercourse with him, after his return to Paris in 1770. Of these the most marked are Florian (1755-1799), Mercier (1740-1814), and Bernardin de Saint-Pierre (1737-1814).

Influence of Rousseau.

The first of these forms a curious link between Voltaire and Rousseau,—nephew of the one, disciple of the other. He wrote comedies, of a highly virtuous and sentimental char-

Florian.

acter; Fables (1792), which are obviously intended to embody the ideal of the Fable set forth in Rousseau's *Lettre à d'Alembert;* historical novels, one of them (*Gonzalve de Cordoue*) on the Fall of Granada; but, above all, Pastorals, of which the best known is *Estelle* (1788). In substance, this is a mere replica of a literary form, already hopelessly out of date. Such merit as it has lies in the setting, which gives what is said to be a faithful and is certainly a pleasing picture of the country on the banks of the Gardon (Languedoc), where Florian himself was born and which he passionately loved. This is the original strain in his work, and it brings him into line with Rousseau, Saint-Pierre, Chateaubriand, and, among later writers, Lamartine and George Sand. It may be added that, besides Rousseau, he owes allegiance to Gessner and, in some of his Pastorals, to Cervantes and the lesser lights of Spain.

Far more important is Mercier.[1] His work, as dramatist, has already been noticed in passing; and it is enough to add that, of all those who followed Diderot in advocacy of *Le Drame*, he was the most convinced and the most persistent. Yet it is not on his dramas, numerous and often interesting as they are, that his chief claim must be based. His creative instinct was comparatively weak; he was above all a man of marvellously keen sympathies, great powers of observation, and an exceptionally vigorous and inquiring mind. Apart

Mercier—as critic.

[1] Mercier has a link with English literature through his daughter, who married Holcroft.

from his photographic record of contemporary manners, and the schemes of social reform which he built upon it, he has left us two "Poetics," which must be regarded as the most complete statement existing of the literary creed accepted by the more adventurous spirits of the fifteen or twenty years immediately preceding the Revolution. These are *Essai sur l'art dramatique* (1773) and *De la Littérature et des Littérateurs* (1778). The latter, like the former, is mainly concerned with the Drama; and it is by far the more searching and pointed of the two. What is it, he asks, that has made the drama of France so inexpressibly barren? In the first place, he replies, it is merely the pastime of "two or three thousand idlers" among the rich; it should be the intellectual recreation of the many. And when we consider what the French drama is, we shall cease to wonder that it leaves the nation entirely untouched. The tragic dramatists have prided themselves on copying the masterpieces of Greece. What more fatal mistake could possibly have been committed? The model, at the best, is inappropriate; how can a modern audience feel any living interest in the themes of two-and-twenty centuries ago? And the copy of this moulder-ing antiquity has not even the merit of fidelity. It is Greece spoilt by French airs and graces; a "hybrid," corresponding to nothing which ever did, or ever can, have existence in reality. The figures of French Tragedy are, in fact, mere "marionettes, moving through the intricacies of a plot deliberately entangled and, for that reason, infinitely false." The falseness

of the matter is enhanced by that of the mechanism and the style; by the "absurd" unities of time and place; by the elaborate diction which, in itself, is enough to stifle the voice of nature. So long as we adhere to verse, it is hardly possible that these things can be altered. The only infallible remedy is to replace verse by prose. "Imagine the prose of Rousseau on the French stage, and you will see how all these verses pale before it." But, behind the question of style lies the far deeper and graver one of matter. Modern life spreads before us, with all the revelations of science, with all the diversity of energies which new conditions have called out. "And we are blind enough to turn away from the living model, in which every muscle swells and stands out full of vitality and expression, in order to draw a Greek or Roman carcase, to colour its livid cheeks, to set it on its tottering feet, and to give" to this automaton "the look, the idiom, and the gestures which are fashionable on the boards of the Parisian stage." Far better would it be to follow in the steps of Molière, of the Spanish dramatists, and above all of Shakespeare;[1] to put life in place of death; to fill our stage with the interests that concern us every day, with the men and women whom we jostle in the streets.

[1] In the latter part of the treatise (ed. 1778, pp. 136-143) is a passage which is obviously written in reply to the truculent attack of Voltaire (see above, p. 362). It may be mentioned that Mercier himself adapted three of the plays of his "favourite author": *King Lear*, *Timon of Athens*, and *Romeo and Juliet* (*Les Tombeaux de Vérone*). In *Timon* he adheres somewhat closely to his original; not so in the others.

No repudiation of the Classical Drama could be more complete. In all points, except glorification of the grotesque, it anticipates by half a century the famous Preface of *Cromwell*. The pity is that, in his own plays, Mercier should have carried out so imperfectly the ideal he had before him; that he should have used the stage so persistently as a pulpit; that, in his eagerness to point a moral, he should have forgotten in practice to give his characters the flesh and blood, the nerve and "muscle," which his theory rightly declared to be the first condition of their existence.[1] For this, no doubt, the natural deficiencies of the author are largely to blame. But no inconsiderable allowance must be made for the influence of Diderot and Rousseau.

As dramatist.

Among Rousseau's disciples, Bernardin de Saint-Pierre stands out as the most intimate and, perhaps, the most original.[2] Like many other writers of the time, he lives mainly by one book, *Paul et Virginie* (1788). The book is filled from end to end with Rousseau's ideas, and it has even a faint reflection of Rousseau's genius. The boy and girl round whom the story centres are true children of nature, the Émile and Sophie of a soil more bounteous than France. But no

Saint-Pierre.

[1] An exception should perhaps be made in favour of *La Brouette du Vinaigrier* (pub. 1775). And that is mainly saved by the effective symbolism of the last act. The wheelbarrow is the true hero of the piece.

[2] It is mainly from him and Mercier that we derive our knowledge of Rousseau as he was in the last years of his life.

sooner does civilisation—in the shape of a worldly aunt, a governor, and a priest—come on their horizon than the whole fabric of beauty crumbles to dust. The lovers are torn asunder, their happiness is destroyed, they do not meet again until Virginie is drowned before her lover's eyes—drowned rather than submit to be rescued by a naked sailor. With the last touch, which is intended to mark the sublime of virtuous sensibility, Rousseau, we may hope, would have had little sympathy. But all the rest is entirely in his vein. So also is the glowing picture of outward nature, the valleys and mountains of Mauritius. Here we come to the most original strain in the genius of the author. Rousseau had painted with unrivalled force the softer scenery of Savoy, the Jura, and the Lower Rhone. But neither he nor any other writer had yet attempted—none with the requisite talent had been in a position to attempt—the sharp contrasts and the unbounded richness of the tropics. Saint-Pierre did so; and for that reason he forms the connecting link between Rousseau and Chateaubriand. Not that, as some have thought, he is to be compared strictly with either writer, though he approaches, no doubt, more closely to the latter. His method is more precise; he wields his botanical terms with a mastery and effect of which there is small trace in Chateaubriand, and none at all in Rousseau. But, with all his vividness, he has not the genius which enabled the others to seize, not merely the outward aspect, but the very soul and spirit, of the scenes they call before us.

It is difficult to believe that this story, so fresh and so full of pathos, fell absolutely flat when it was read in manuscript to Madame Necker and a circle of her literary friends. One of the company went to sleep; another—it was Buffon—stole away; the hostess herself pronounced it "a glass of iced water." When published, it was exalted to the skies, and its fame has never waxed entirely dim. The same can hardly be said of the author's remaining stories—*La Chaumière Indienne*, *Le Café de Surate*, and *L'Arcadie*. The last, which owes much to the counsels of Rousseau, remains a fragment. It is perhaps mainly remarkable for the influence which it obviously had on *Les Martyrs* of Chateaubriand. The two former are tales after the fashion of Voltaire,—of Voltaire acting, by a passing freak, as the mouthpiece of Rousseau. They are full of irony against the intolerance of the creeds; and the irony is none the less effective because it is altogether free from bitterness. They are full also of the author's childlike faith in the state of nature. Under another form, this is again the theme of the one work which it remains to mention—*Études de la Nature* (1784), of which *Paul et Virginie* originally formed part. Here Saint-Pierre turns to that outward nature which has never, like man, suffered divorce from its creator. The book is an eloquent plea for the doctrine of final causes; and, eloquence apart, it has all the defects which that doctrine, when expounded in detail, inevitably involves. The pious writer was unfortunately altogether without humour; he is ready to see the designs of Providence—a Providence eager to

cater for the social joys of man—in the very rind of the melon.

We have now only to cast a rapid glance at the miscellaneous writers of the years preceding the Revolution, and of the Revolution itself. We shall then pass to the three great figures which stand at the entrance of the new era and mark the dawn of the literature of modern France.

Miscellaneous writers.

The chief names of the pre-revolutionary period under this head are those of Raynal, Buffon, and the author of *Le jeune Anacharsis;* to these we may add Grimm and Madame d'Épinay.

The one work of Raynal (1713-1796) which calls for notice is the famous *Histoire philosophique et politique . . . des deux Indes* (1774). It is a bitter, and it must be confessed a too just, attack on the greed and cruelty of the European Companies and Governments; and the latter of these vices it attributes, again with much justice, to the influence of an "exclusive and imperious religion." The one "establishment," in favour of which Raynal inclines to make an exception, is that of the Jesuits in Paraguay. This somewhat flimsy compilation, which is said to be largely the work of Diderot and others, exercised a large influence on public opinion during the seed-time of the Revolution, and the author was regarded as one of the staunchest champions of progress—a reputation which was hardly sustained when events put it to the proof.

Raynal.

Far more substantial is the work of Buffon (1707-

1788), his monumental *Histoire Naturelle* (1749-1788). Both by date and subject this falls beyond our scope. The author, however, touches general literature not merely by the beauty of his own style, but by his attitude towards the literary questions of his day. This appears from two discourses delivered before the Academy,—the one on the occasion of his own reception (1753), the famous discourse on Style; the other more than a score of years later, on the death of De Belloy (1775). The leading idea of the former is contained in the sentence, "Style is nothing more than the order and movement which the writer puts into his thoughts,"—a conception which is further defined by the following: "Nothing is more harmful to warmth of style than the desire to put striking touches at every point." At first sight this might seem to exclude everything but the logical sequence, which is certainly the basis of style, but which, as certainly, does not exhaust its conditions. And that, no doubt, was the tendency of Buffon; as, in England perhaps more than in France, it was the tendency of the age in which he grew to manhood. Nor can the familiar definition which immediately follows, "Le style est l'homme même," be brought against this interpretation. For a glance at the context, which is commonly ignored, will show that Buffon's intention here is to contrast the mere collection of facts with the character, "the order and the movement," which they receive at the hands of the good writer. The facts, he says in effect, are

Buffon.

every man's property; "they lie outside of the man; the style is the man himself."[1] Yet, when we remember that he speaks not only of the "order" but also of the movement of thought, and when we think of his own style, which is certainly not lacking in warmth or colour, we shall incline to place a more liberal interpretation on the passage than that which suggests itself at the first moment. The other discourse touches us more nearly. For in it Buffon boldly ranges himself on the side of literary innovation. Recalling the new paths into which De Belloy had directed the Drama, and adroitly enlisting the great name of Voltaire, a reluctant witness, in the same cause, he launches into an almost savage attack on the spirit of Greek poetry, and on the absurdity of those moderns who "have made a servile compact for ever to copy the pictures presented by that age of barbarism." No wonder that heretics, like Mercier, hailed this outburst with delight; that they revelled as they watched "all the Greek faces of the Academy turn pale with horror and surprise."[2]

Barthélemy.

Of *Le Voyage du jeune Anacharsis en Grèce* (begun 1757, published 1788) by Barthélemy (1716-1793) little is to be said. It is a work of learning, couched in the form of a romance; an ancestor of the *Charicles* and *Gallus*, which were the terror of our school-days, and as crowded with references to the less read classical authors as they.

[1] There is a variant, *Le style est de l'homme même*, which brings out the sense still more clearly.

[2] Mercier, *De la Littérature*, p. 134.

It relates, in four bulky quartos, the experience of a young Scythian who travels in Greece during the fourth century B.C., and who criticises the manners and customs of Athens and other cities with a keen eye to the latitude of Paris. It ends with the battle of Chæronea, which is recorded in the following laconic sentences: "The battle is lost. Philotas is dead. I have no friends left. Greece is no more. I return to Scythia." Apart from its learning, which is really surprising, the book had a large share in placing the classical ideal of liberty before the French nation, then on the eve of the Revolution. And the good Abbé may claim credit for having done much to mould both the thought and speech of Saint-Just, Robespierre, and Barère, not to mention his avowed godson, Anacharsis Clootz, "the orator of the human race."[1]

Grimm.

Grimm (1723-1807) was one of the acutest observers, and probably the soundest critic, of his day. He lives for us in the pages of his *Correspondance Littéraire*, which contains some papers by Raynal, some (including the notable *Paradox on Acting*[2]) by Diderot, and not a few by Madame d'Épinay, who took the place of the editor in chief when he was off duty. The later years (from 1774 onwards) appear to have been undertaken, under Grimm's direction, by Meister of Zürich.

[1] *Anacharsis* presents a strange contrast with the sombre imagination and vague mysticism of another work, inspired in part by an antiquity still more remote, in part by the hopes and aspirations of the Revolution; *Les Ruines*, by Volney (1791).

[2] *Corr. Litt.*, vii. 281-292, 305-318.

The Correspondence was addressed to the Empress Catherine, the King of Poland, and various German princelings, and it forms a complete survey of the literary activities of France during nearly forty years (1753-1790). It opens with a notice of *Le Dissipateur* of Destouches, and closes with one of Burke's *Reflections*—"grande mortalis ævi spatium." The value of Grimm's criticism lies in its great detachment, and in the wide knowledge on which it rests. He starts with as few preconceived notions as it is possible for man to do, and honestly strives to let each work speak for itself before he pronounces judgment. Linked as he was with d'Alembert, he is entirely free from the narrowness which the necessities of war, together with no small touch of natural pedantry, had forced upon his friend. The philosophers, he admits, have their fixed dogmas, their commonplaces of the pulpit, their *point d'orgue*, no less than the churchmen.[1] The literary heretics, Sedaine, Mercier, and the rest, are not to be laughed out of court because they offend the orthodox susceptibilities of Voltaire. As an instance of his fairness, we may point to his comments on Diderot's review of Saint-Lambert; or, what is yet more significant, to the unfailing respect—it would hardly be too much to say admiration—with which he speaks of the "English Æschylus," Shakespeare.[2] It was this that called out the grateful recognition of Wordsworth, who, perhaps with justice, attributes the superiority of Grimm in this matter to "his German blood and German educa-

[1] *Corr. Litt.*, vii. 249. [2] Ib., ix. 316-323; xiii. 391.

tion."[1] The one thing which it is hard to forgive him —and it touches the man rather than the critic—is the fulsome flattery which he lavishes on the unspeakable Catherine. But that is a weakness which he shares with all the philosophers; not to mention that, to him personally, she was an exceptionally good customer.

Madame d'Épinay.

Madame d'Épinay (1723-1783) was closely bound to Grimm during the last five-and-twenty years of her life; she was also, for a time, no less closely bound to Rousseau. The twofold influence is reflected in her work, and found a ready response in her character. With Grimm, if we may judge from her contributions to the Correspondence and from certain passages in her *Mémoires*, she shares the coolness of head which made the fortune of the critic, though not the less amiable qualities which make him so distasteful as a man. To the strain of Rousseau belong the extreme "sensibility" which she had from nature, and the fine discernment which is seldom or never to be found apart from sympathy. It is these qualities that give salt to her *Mémoires*, a kind of writing in which the French genius has always shone, and to which she gave a fresh turn by adopting the form of a romance. Her Memoirs are probably the best of the period just preceding the Revolution. They give a vivid picture of the society, noble, financial, and literary, of the third quarter of the century, and, in particular, they offer a side of Rousseau's character and genius

[1] Essay supplementary to the Preface of *Lyrical Ballads* (1815).

which, but for them, it would have been difficult to divine.[1]

Side by side with the Memoirs of Madame d'Épinay we may place, passing now to the revolutionary period, those of Madame Roland (1753-1793): the latter the typical product of the new order, as the former of the old. Nothing could mark more clearly how complete was the breach which France had made with her own past than the contrast between the two. In the one we breathe the scented atmosphere of the salon; in the other, the free air of the market-place and the assembly. In the one, there is that curious blending of "philosophy" with the triumphs of the drawing-room which marked the last phase of the old order; in the other, the consuming passion for the public weal which inspired the Revolution. It is needless to say much of Memoirs so familiar. Enough to recall the vivid picture of bourgeois life at the beginning, and the touching simplicity of the writer's farewell to her child and the nurse who was left to guard it, of her references to her husband, of her parting from "one I dare not name," at the close.

Madame Roland.

With Madame Roland it is natural to associate one of the three other writers who fall to be mentioned in this place — Condorcet (1743-1794). Of his numerous writings, many of which are on mathematical and kindred subjects, three only survive for the general reader—his Lives of Turgot and Voltaire, and his *Tableau des Progrès*

Condorcet.

[1] See especially t. ii., pp. 61-72.

de l'Esprit humain. The last alone calls for notice. It has been lavishly praised by Comte and his disciples, on the ground that it contains the earliest clear statement of the creed of progress. It may be doubted, however, whether such praise is entirely deserved. The progress of which it is important to be assured is progress in things moral, social, and, we may fairly add, philosophical. Now of progress in these matters Condorcet says comparatively little; and what he does say is largely vitiated by the narrow views of Christianity, political philosophy, and metaphysics, which he shared with the rest of his school, notably Voltaire, by whom it is clear that he was deeply influenced. He is mainly concerned with progress in the sciences and technical arts,—in subjects, that is, where it has never been seriously disputed. And in these subjects he adds little to what had already been said in Voltaire's *Essai sur les Mœurs.* Altogether, it would be hazardous to maintain that his "sketch" marks an important stage in the development of that belief in progress which was among the most fruitful achievements of the generation that followed. It cannot, indeed, be reckoned as significant in this respect as the Essay of Kant, which preceded it by ten years.[1] Yet, when all deductions have been made, the *Tableau* is a striking monument to the faith which inspired the vast sacrifices of the Revolution; still more, perhaps, to the heroism of the man who wrote it with the sentence of outlawry upon his head, in the full knowledge that the next

[1] See above, p. 347.

moment might drag him from his hiding-place to the scaffold.

Journalism.

It is, however, neither in Memoirs nor in Philosophy that the Revolution leaves its most distinctive mark. The true vocation of the period is to be found in journalism and eloquence. Till the approach of the Revolution, the periodical press of France had been limited to literary criticism; the news reported was of the scantiest; the political leading article was virtually unknown. Eloquence, again, was confined to the pulpit and the law courts. Oratory as we understand it, the oratory of the tribune and the platform, was the birth of the Revolution, which, indeed, without the journalists and orators, would have been impossible.

Sieyès.

Even to run through the names of the chief journalists and pamphleteers of the Revolution would be a task far beyond our limits. It is enough to take out two typical figures—the Abbé Sieyès (1748-1836) and Camille Desmoulins (1760-1794). The former is best known by his pamphlet, *Qu'est ce que le Tiers État* (1788), a masterpiece of bold thought and trenchant exposition, which contained the "principles of '89" in far more than germ. Throughout the Revolution, Sieyès was regarded as holding the "key to all the Constitutions"; and at length, after 18 Brumaire, which he had conspired to bring about, he was induced to table the fruits of his meditations, ripened by an experience unrivalled in the history of the world. The result was the first draft of the Constitution of the year viii; an elaborate mechanism of

checks and counterchecks at which even the "genius of the English Constitution," if it survived the death of Burke, might have stood aghast. The draft, however, was altered beyond recognition by a master-hand. "Sieyès," said Napoleon, "had supplied nothing but shadows; on my word, I have put some substance."

Desmoulins.

A man who, with all his faults, commands more sympathy is Desmoulins. Hero of the insurrection which secured the fall of the Bastille and the humiliation of the king, he remained a fighter to the last, bringing to the service of the Revolution all the wit, and unhappily all the recklessness, which we are apt to associate with the French genius in politics. His chief writings are *La France Libre* and *Le Discours de la Lanterne* (both in 1789), *Brissot Démasqué* (1792), and two periodicals, *Les Révolutions de France et de Brabant* (November 1789—July 1791) and *Le Vieux Cordelier* (December 1793—March 1794). The earlier pieces, which are not lacking in political sense, are sprinkled on every page with personal accusations, and that at a time when accusation led straight to the lamp-post or the scaffold. The discredit of the Girondins was, in the first instance, largely due to his assaults. But when sentence was passed, a cry of remorse was wrung from the horrified accuser. From that moment he did all that was in his power to stay the flow of blood. And *Le Vieux Cordelier* stands as the monument of his repentance and his courage. In one number, while professing to contrast the cruelties of despotism with the tender mercies of the Republic,

he in reality launches a scathing satire against the latter. In another, he throws away even this thin disguise and calls aloud for a "Committee of Mercy." "Terror," he says, appealing to Cicero, as before to Tacitus and Suetonius, "is the mentor only of a day." This drew on him the resentment of the Committee which was *not* of Mercy, and he perished side by side with Danton (April 6, 1794).

Oratory.

The orators of the Revolution are yet more notable than its journalists. And here again we must content ourselves with the greatest, the Abbé Maury, and subsequently Barnave, on the side of resistance; Mirabeau, Danton, Saint-Just, Robespierre, and, before all, Isnard and Vergniaud, as champions of the Revolution. Few utterances have been more electric in their effect than the cry of Danton—"Il nous faut de l'audace, et encore de l'audace, et toujours de l'audace"—at the moment when the allies were expected at the gates of Paris. Few things in modern oratory are more moving than Mirabeau's appeal to the memories of the Bartholomew massacre (April 1790), or than Vergniaud's indictment of the perfidy of the Court (June 1792).

Tyranny of Napoleon.

With the advent of Napoleon both the Journal and the Tribune were summarily snuffed out. The one, shackled by a rigid censorship, was frightened into a fatuity which the tyrant himself was forced to grumble at. The other was dragooned, with not even that sign of remorse. The Tribunate, a body which spoke but did not vote,

was the one rag of liberty which the consular government had to boast. And, during the brief span of its existence, it numbered more than one distinguished speaker—Joseph Chénier may be mentioned—and one orator, Benjamin Constant.[1] But the boldness of these critics at once excited the wrath of the despot. The Tribunate was purged of their presence in 1802, and was finally abolished, "less as a change than an improvement of our institutions," in 1807. It is a stinging satire on the system of Napoleon that eloquence should have revived with the Restoration.

Romance.

We pass from the old order to the new; from the writers of the transition, and the small band whose leanings were wholly or mainly towards the past, to those who led the way in the romantic revival which was to dominate the future. In this movement there are three leading figures—André Chénier, Chateaubriand, and Madame de Staël.

André Chénier.

The earliest and, in many ways, the greatest of these is Chénier (1762-1794). The short span of his life was violently broken by the guillotine; but his genius had already found time to show itself in three several directions: in that loving presentation of Greek life and the

[1] Some words from the speech which drew down the wrath of Napoleon on Constant may be quoted: "Without the independence of the Tribunate, there would be neither harmony nor constitution. Nothing would be left but slavery and silence—a silence that all Europe would hear." The speech was made at the beginning o 1800. See also M^me^ de Staël, *Dix Années d'Exil*, chap. ii.

Greek spirit which is embodied in the *Idylles;* in reflective poetry; and, finally, in the passionate cry of wounded honour and pity for persecuted innocence which rings through the *Iambes* and lyrics of the last months. His method of working, as he tells us in one of the *Épîtres*, was to keep several pieces on the anvil at the same moment; and this makes it peculiarly hard to date any one of them, except the latest, with strict accuracy. On the whole, however, it seems clear that the *Idylles*, with perhaps some of the idyllic and reflective fragments, belong to the period between 1783 and the outbreak of the Revolution; the *Jeu de Paume*, and parts of the reflective poems,[1] to the earlier phases of the Revolution; while the *Iambes* and lyrics are stamped in every line with the passions and counter-passions of the Terror.

Idylles.

Of these, the *Idylles*, though hardly in themselves the most perfect, have perhaps left the deepest trace upon the movement which they herald. In the source of their inspiration, no less than in their spirit and manner, they are an entirely new thing in the literature of France, perhaps of Christendom. At one stroke they cancel the tradition of two hundred—it would hardly be an exaggeration to say two thousand—years, and carry us back to the spring-time and the dawn. Half a Greek himself, it is in the Greek masterpieces

[1] *E.g.*, the closing passage of *Hermes*, which, alike from its temper and its mention of "ten years' composition," must surely belong to the last year or two of his life.

that Chénier finds his model; and with him, as at a later day with Morris, they become the source of a poetry which had all the effect of romance. It has sometimes been said that the spirit of Chénier is Alexandrine rather than, in the strict sense, Hellenic; nay, Roman rather than Greek. The latter judgment, prompted by the obvious echoes of Propertius and other Latin elegists, is clearly mistaken. The former, correct possibly in the letter, is none the less misleading. The vein of Theocritus which the French poet works is precisely *not* the Alexandrine: it is the purely pastoral and Sicilian. More than that, through the form of the Sicilian pastoral there shines, at least in the finest of these pieces, the light of a larger and more primitive inspiration—the inspiration of the Anthology, when the Anthology is most purely Greek; a reflection even of the heroic age and of Homer. The freshness of the early world lies upon these poems—of a world fair and noble in itself, fairer and more noble by contrast with the faded graces and artificial sentiment of the society in the midst of which they were written. And this is the secret not only of their charm, but of the specifically romantic effect which they create. When, five-and-twenty years after his death, the poems of Chénier were at last published, it was the *Idylles*, above all, that became the rallying-cry of the romantic rebels; and on none, whether we consider the versification or the choice and treatment of subject, was this influence greater than on Hugo. As was to be expected, the influence is most apparent in his earlier collections—

in *Les Orientales* and *Les Voix Intérieures*. But in one at least of his later poems, and that among the greatest (*Le Satyre*), we catch unmistakably a distant echo of *L'Aveugle*. By universal admission, the most notable of the *Idylles* are *Lydé*, *Le jeune Malade*, and *La jeune Tarentine* in the more pastoral vein; *Le Mendiant* and *L'Aveugle* in the more primitive and heroic.

Fragments of Suzanne *and* Hermes.

The genius of Chénier is strangely complex. And the simplicity, freshness, vividness of the *Idylles* are hardly the most prominent qualities in the rest of his early work. From the mere fragment of *Suzanne* (Susannah and the Elders) which has come down to us it is hazardous to draw conclusions. Yet the prose draft seems to show that description would have played a large part in it: not the frigid description of Saint-Lambert and Delille, but the decorative picture-work of Hugo or Gautier. And, if so, we have one more link between Chénier and the men of 1830. On the other hand, the note of reflection—and it is essentially philosophic reflection that he offers—found but a faint echo among the later heroes of romance. It belongs rather to the age of Buffon and the Encyclopédie; at moments it recalls, as Chénier himself would have desired, the impassioned naturalism of Diderot, the large thought and utterance of Lucretius. *Hermes*, his chief effort in this sort, is, like so many others, a torso. If completed, it would have dealt with the triple theme of nature, man, and society. Fragment as it is, the main significance of the poem, apart from its glowing sense of life in nature, lies in detached

lines and phrases, which are not seldom aflame with inspiration; above all, in the rhythm, which once more showed the language to be capable of harmonies unsuspected by the generation of Voltaire, not fully mastered till that of Hugo.

Until 1789, Chénier had lived much in a world of his own; given up to friendship and literature; concerning himself little with public interests. When the Revolution came, he, like the other nobler spirits of his time, hailed it as the dawn of a new era. To this conviction the Ode on the *Jeu de Paume* —not, however, one of his best efforts—gives vigorous expression. But after the most crying abuses of the old order had been swept away, he took alarm, not unnaturally, at the unrest and turbulence which prevailed; and from August 1790, the date of his *Avis au Peuple français*, ranged himself definitely with the Conservative, soon to be known as the Constitutional, party. He spoke often, in this sense, at the *Feuillants* and, till the fall of the Monarchy, wrote constantly in the *Journal de Paris*.[1] He may have been right or wrong in his estimate of events. But it is impossible not to reverence the man who thus exposed his life in what he held to be the cause of justice and honour. If others had shown the same courage, the course of the Revolution might possibly have been changed. He seems to have been consulted by Malesherbes at the trial of the king. He certainly blazed out in defence of Charlotte Corday in the summer of the same year (1793). He had his

[1] See his Prose Works edited by Becq de Fouquières (1886).

reward — the reward which he probably foresaw. Arrested in March 1794, he was thrown into prison; lay there until, thanks to an imprudent intervention on the part of his father, he was recalled to the notice of the Committee of Public Safety; was tried and executed on the 7th of Thermidor, 1794. Had there been but two days' respite, his release would probably have been ensured by the fall of Robespierre (9th Thermidor).

From the bitterness which poisoned the last two years of his life he drew a fresh source of inspiration. And never, save perhaps in the love poems which belong to the same period, has he risen so high as in these outpourings of righteous wrath and indignant pity. Since Juvenal lifted the avenging sword against the crimes of the Cæsars, no nobler satire had appeared in Europe than those in which Chénier called down the vengeance of heaven upon the iniquities of the "peuple-roi" and the government it applauded. Nor had the note of tenderness ever before mingled with the cry of indignation, as it does in *La Jeune Captive*, the ode to Charlotte Corday, and the lines beginning "Triste vieillard, depuis que pour tes cheveux blancs." In a matter where resemblance of treatment may so easily be due to that of subject, it is perhaps perilous to assume conscious imitation. Yet it may well be that, in this as in other respects, the *Iambes* were present to the imagination of a yet greater satirist, when he hurled the thunders and lightnings of *Les Châtiments*.

Later poetry.

What, then, was the work accomplished by Chénier? In what sense is he the pioneer of Romance? The answer is that he renewed both the form and the spirit of French poetry. In respect of form, he was the first to break the shackles which the fashion of nearly two centuries had laid on the Alexandrine. In his use of the cæsura and of *enjambement* — as again in the sonorous ring of such lines as "L'Océan eternel où bouillonne la vie"—he is the master of those who, a generation later, founded a new tradition in French poetry; the master, above all, of Hugo. Nor is this merely a question of externals. Until the chains of the old forms were struck off, it was impossible that the new spirit should wake itself to life. The two things are inseparably bound together; they are different aspects of the same process. The change of spirit, here as always, is doubtless the more important. And here, too, the poetry of Chénier is a landmark. In the *Idylles*, French poetry once more became what it had not been since La Fontaine, perhaps since Du Bellay, "simple and sensuous." In the *Iambes* and Lyrics, notably in *Charlotte Corday* and *La Jeune Captive*, it takes the still deeper note of passion. The loss that the poetry of his country suffered by his early death may well be called irreparable. Had he lived, it is not impossible that French romanticism might have been saved from some of its extravagance. And in any case, the world can ill afford the loss of further poems so rich in inspiration, yet so pure and so chastened, as the *Idylles* and the later satires and lyrics.

Place of Chénier.

If Chénier is the poet of the romantic dawn, Madame de Staël (1766-1817) is its orator, and, on one side at least, the living embodiment of its ideas. This, in itself, implies that her bent was more intellectual than imaginative. And it must be added that in her practical instinct, in her ceaseless endeavours for the political and social welfare of her generation, she is rather the heir of the Revolution than the prophet, or even the critic, of Romance. In spite of this, it is true that, even in its imaginative aspect, her work is of the utmost importance; and that, not only in France but in all Europe, the romantic movement is deeply in her debt.

Madame de Staël.

Daughter of Necker and of that Suzanne Curchod for whom Gibbon so obediently "sighed," she played a large part in the active life of her time, as well as in letters; and in an age which tested character to the utmost, all she did was to her honour. Her life as author naturally falls into two periods, of which the dividing line may be fixed in 1800, the year of *De la Littérature*. During the earlier period her preoccupation was rather with politics than literature; and by subject, though not by date, two of her maturer writings attach themselves to the same period—her edition of the works of Necker, with a biographical introduction (1804), and the *Considérations sur la Révolution française*, published shortly after her death (1818). We turn first to her political writings.

The most important of these are *Réflexions sur la Paix* and *Sur la Paix intérieure* (1794-95), together with the *Considérations* already mentioned. The two

former are in the nature of political pamphlets; the latter is a historical work which, in all that relates to Necker, the September massacres and the events immediately preceding them, or again the revolution of Fructidor, is a document of first-rate authority. By personal preference and conviction, Madame de Staël was an advocate of such a limited monarchy as then existed in England, and, with considerable modifications, had been established in France, at least on paper, by the Constituent Assembly (1789-91). And it is a striking testimony to her fairness and sagacity that, in the two pamphlets referred to, she should accept the Republic as, in the historical phrase of Thiers, "that which divides us the least," and as the one possible barrier against a return to the Reign of Terror. With great cogency she calls on the adherents of limited monarchy to rally round a moderate republic,—an appeal which unfortunately was not successful. It is, however, to be noticed that she regards France as unalterably opposed to any form of personal government; and that, in spite of the predictions of Burke and of her own father, she has no fears of that military despotism which began to cast its shadow before it in 1796, and from which she was herself destined to suffer so deeply. In respect of style, it must be confessed that the *Réflexions* give no promise of the eloquence which, always perhaps rhetorical rather than literary in character, certainly cannot be denied to her later writings,—still less, if universal testimony be any guide, to her conversation.

Political writings.

Considérations.

Both in style and thought the *Considérations* are infinitely more mature. Indeed, even when we take account of all that has been written since, it may be doubted whether any judgment of the events between the first Ministry of Necker and the fall of Napoleon shows more insight or more freedom from bitterness. On the Reign of Terror and the rule of Napoleon she doubtless had strong opinions. But this is, to say the least, permissible. And, quite apart from its value as a record of facts, the book offers a lively image of the temper engendered in a generous and sensitive nature by the successive tyrannies of the Jacobins and Napoleon, the "child and champion of Jacobinism." The one error which runs through the earlier part of the work is the failure to recognise that, after the king's attempt to crush the Revolution by an armed force (June, July, 1789), all confidence in him was necessarily destroyed; and consequently that the endeavour to set up a constitutional monarchy, with the "deposed tyrant" for monarch, was foredoomed to failure. In style the *Considérations*, though lacking the final revision of the author, maintain a high level of natural eloquence. And there are passages — for instance, that in which she contrasts the solid gains of the Republic with the flashy triumphs and humiliating losses of the Empire—for which this praise would be faint indeed.

We turn to her work as literary critic and as novelist. Without pausing on the *Essai sur les Fictions* (1798), which is mainly significant for its

exaggerated insistence on the moral function of the imagination, we pass at once to *La Littérature*, the first work which gives any adequate impression of her genius.

The full title of the book, *De la Littérature dans ses rapports avec les Institutions sociales*, is itself enough to show the dominant intention of the writer. From beginning to end she strives to prove that there is an intimate connection between the life of a nation, its political and social organisation, and its literature; and that progress in the latter region necessarily follows from progress in the former. This at once reveals both the intellectual affinities of the author and her conspicuous originality. If she goes back to Condorcet, or even Montesquieu, she reaches forward to such writers as Hegel and the large band of thinkers who, consciously or unconsciously, have drawn their inspiration from Hegel. Montesquieu had shown that the political and social institutions of a people are, or tend to be, the expression of its character, as modified by climate and historical conditions. Condorcet, to whose authority the writer explicitly appeals, had assumed that, alike in his inner and his outer life, the reason of man has followed an intelligible law of progress. It was left for Madame de Staël to urge that, as the outward organism of a nation reflects its inner life and character, and as, like them, it is subject to continuous progress, so the imagination in its turn is inseparably bound up with the more conscious processes of man's reason, practical as well as speculative,

De la Littérature.

and is continuously modified by their growth; in other words, that it too is subject to the law of progress.

Its originality.

In asserting the close bond which exists between the life of a nation and its literature, the authoress was doubtless at one with other writers of her time—with Herder, for instance, and with Goethe. Not only, however, did she reach this result without any aid from their writings, but she defined it more clearly; she grasped its significance more fully; and she transformed it by a conception of progress which may, as we have seen, have hovered obscurely before the mind of Herder, but which, in this connection, was altogether alien to the speculations of Goethe. This is the enduring service which she rendered both to the theory and the practice of criticism. And though it drew on her sharp attacks from the opposite camp — from Fontanes in particular, and Chateaubriand — she stoutly held her ground; and her constancy has been justified by time. Few ideas have done more to enlarge the scope of criticism, or to give it fresh energy.

Anticipations of Romance.

It must not be supposed that Madame de Staël was a fanatic of "perfectibility." In respect of form, she is eager to admit, the limit of perfection is soon reached; and, so far, it is idle to expect that the moderns can improve upon the ancients. But there remains the ever-flowing fountain of thought, and of feeling which itself is ceaselessly modified by progressive changes of thought. Indeed, like most critics of her bent, she is apt to lay exaggerated

stress on the matter, as opposed to the form, of imaginative art. She considers that "la haute littérature," following the model set by Montesquieu and Rousseau, will more and more come to concern itself with the promotion of "useful changes"; and she announces that "purely imaginative poetry," in which, however, she must not be understood to include the Drama, "will make no more progress in France." This shows the defects of her qualities. It shows also how far she was from sharing the ideal which was soon to be realised by the poets of romance. Yet in this, the closing part of the treatise, there is much that tends in exactly the opposite direction. She has some fruitful hints, in part to be carried out by the romanticists of the next generation, upon the changes which new currents of thought and a new social order might be expected to bring about in tragedy and comedy. And she goes far to predict the splendid outburst of reflective poetry which, within the next sixty years, was to give a new birth to the literature of her country. Above all, she points with generous enthusiasm to the new sources of inspiration which lay in the "literatures of the north," Scandinavia, England, and Germany—a subject to which she returns in the last and greatest of her critical writings, *De l'Allemagne* (1810-13).

De l'Allemagne.

Of all her works, this is the one which had the deepest influence and gives the clearest impression of her powers. Here, as in the earlier treatise, there is doubtless some lack of proportion. She acknowledges to the full the sup-

remacy of Goethe; but she writes with hardly less ardour of Werner than of Schiller. This, however, is the zeal of the explorer. And it is as "voyager in strange seas of thought" and imagination that she must be judged. She was the first of her own, the first of any foreign, nation to feel the supreme beauty and importance of what had been done in Germany since Lessing; the first to give a comprehensive view of the literary movement which for the last half century had been carried forward across the Rhine; the first to grasp its intimate connection with the revolution in philosophic thought which had taken place at the same time, and which other writers, with the honourable exception of Coleridge, had greeted with ignorant and stupid ridicule.[1] The zest with which she throws herself into this strange world of poetry is astonishing, Still more surprising, perhaps, is the insight with which she threads her way through the intricacies of Kant, and fastens, without faltering, on the points at issue between him and the two earliest of his successors. A philosopher might find much to criticise in her own contributions to the subject. But her exposition of the speculative movement from Kant to Schelling—and this is the main task to which she sets herself—is singularly clear. Considering her lack of previous training, considering, above all, the curious lapses of her earlier work in dealing with such matters, her success is

[1] Presque tout ce qui s'est fait depuis *La Critique de la Raison pure*, en littérature comme en philosophie, vient de l'impulsion donnée par cet ouvrage.—T. ii., p. 227.

little short of a miracle. And this remains true when the largest possible allowance has been made for any help she may have received from Schlegel.

Inspiration to be drawn from German thought and poetry.

The significance of this is far more than personal. It was the deliberate aim of the writer to undermine the materialist creed which had rooted itself in France during the last century, and to proclaim the speculative validity of the idealism to which, from the first, she had turned by instinct. The "philosophy" of *La Littérature*, so offensive to Chateaubriand, is now thrown to the winds. The antagonist system is recognised as that which alone can justify the religious, moral, and literary ideals that the authoress has at heart. In the closing chapters she calls on her countrymen to renounce the mocking spirit which, thanks to creed and circumstance, had become a second nature, and take to themselves a more generous temper and a nobler faith. There, she urges, is to be found their true glory; there, the "enthusiasm" which will give new life to the thought and poetry of France. It has been said, she remarks, that the genius of France has always lain in following the classical model. "For us, however, the choice is not between classical and romantic poetry, but between a mere imitation of the one and the inspiration which may be drawn from the other." And here experience, partial though it be, may serve as a guide. "Each time that an author has poured foreign sap into the orderly growth of French poetry, France has rapturously applauded. Rousseau, Saint-Pierre, Chateau-

briand are all, it may be unconsciously, of the German school. They all draw their inspiration from their inmost soul."[1]

Exile.

In these sentences lies the sting of the whole treatise; and the next generation was to carry it home. It was just this, however, that aroused the wrath of Napoleon and his understrappers. Madame de Staël, who had been in partial exile since 1803, had ventured within fifty leagues of Paris, in order to superintend the printing of her book. Thanks to several suppressions, which throw a curious light on the inner mind of Napoleonic tyranny, she had succeeded in getting the manuscript passed by the censors. Suddenly, after the last proof had been corrected (Oct. 1810), she was informed by the Minister of Police, the same Savary who acted as chief instrument in the murder of the Duc d'Enghien, that the whole impression had been seized and destroyed. "Your last work," he insolently wrote, "is not French. It is I who have stopped the printing of it. . . . It appears to me that the air of this country does not agree with you; and we are not yet reduced to seek for models among the nations whom you admire."[2] Banished to Coppet, the authoress escaped in 1812, and made her way to Russia. She fled from Moscow a month before Napoleon's entry, and passed through Sweden to England. It was there that *De l'Allemagne* was at

[1] *De l'Allemagne*, i. 274; 200, 201.

[2] Preface to *De l'Allemagne*. Savary's letter is also given in *Dix Années d'Exil*.

length published, appropriately enough within a week of the battle of Leipzig.

Her novels.

To English readers Madame de Staël is best known by her two novels, *Delphine* (1802) and *Corinne* (1806), both of which offer an imaginative reflection of her passion for Benjamin Constant. Neither can claim the highest kind of originality. Both, in the main, rather go back to the models of the last century than create a new type of their own. *Delphine*, both in form and spirit, is of the stock of *La nouvelle Héloïse;* as indeed, through all her work, Madame de Staël is the spiritual heir of Rousseau. Yet justice has hardly been done to the great power of portraiture which this novel displays, nor to the skill with which the situation is so framed as to throw the characters into dramatic conflict. It is true that two at least of the leading figures are, more or less, drawn from life,—a circumstance which gave occasion to one of Talleyrand's happiest jests. But this is no detraction from the merits of the book, which rather gains than loses by painting a character so full of light and shade and, with all its brilliance, so born for suffering as that of the authoress. The same is true—as has generally been held, in yet greater measure—of *Corinne*. Here, however, the dramatic interest is entirely centred in the heroine; the other characters are no better than lay figures; and the heroine herself suffers from the drapery and the lime-lights which were intended to set her off. But, in spite of these drawbacks, the conflict between love and worldly convention, which

forms the main theme of the book, is painted with extraordinary force. And in two respects *Corinne* may fairly be said to make an epoch in the history of the novel. It marks the decisive entry, foreshadowed even in *Delphine*, of the "misunderstood woman," who was destined to play so large a part in the novel of the next two generations. And, if we except *Wilhelm Meister* and its direct offshoots, it is the first attempt to interweave themes of art and poetry with the dramatic interest which had hitherto been treated as the sole legitimate subject of the novelist. It must be admitted that in both points Madame de Staël has been surpassed by her successors, above all by George Sand, the most direct and perhaps the greatest of them. The discourses on art are too much in the nature of lectures; and the Capitol, just because it is the Capitol, is a less appropriate scene for the woes of the heroine than the green-room of Lucrezia Floriani or the meadows along the banks of the Floss. But the writer might well be proud to have opened a vein which was to prove so rich; and we feel throughout that in her own personality there is something greater than she was able to embody in her imaginative creations.

Her relation to romance.

To some, though to a much less, extent this is also true of her critical writings. For here too, though less and less as time went on, she was shackled by the traditions of the past. With some sides of the romantic movement, particularly those which were to appeal most to her own countrymen, she was in little sym-

pathy. To the cult of style, both for good and for evil, she was an utter stranger. Her own style has neither the grace of classical France, nor the richness and music of romance; neither the light touch of Voltaire, nor the deep melody, the vivid colouring, of Chateaubriand or Rousseau. On all that tended to sever art from the great issues of thought and passion she looked with suspicion. It was the author of *Werther* who went home to her heart; she admired the later Goethe, but admired him with trembling. To Théophile Gautier and other devotees of art for art's sake, it is safe to say that she would have given no quarter. In the heir of the Revolution this was natural enough. What is more strange is that the disciple of Rousseau should have had so blunt a sense of outward nature. Amid the glories of Coppet, she never ceased to sigh for the "fountain of the Rue de Bac." This, no doubt, was, at least in part, the cry of the exile. But there is nothing to show that she would have felt otherwise, had she been free to start for Paris the next hour. These may seem large abatements. But the other side of the account must not be forgotten. Her very shortcomings, if we except the lack of feeling for outward nature, bore witness to the danger of divorcing poetry from life, of "trampling the roots of humanity under foot." She was not wrong in finding the seeds of this danger in the later work of Goethe and Schiller. She was right in warning her countrymen against fostering their growth. And the history of French Romance would have been different if her warning had taken fuller effect. As it

was, her largeness of heart, her love of truth, and her faith in progress, formed a healthy influence in the dawn of French Romance, and did something to counteract the more perilous tendencies — the love of phrases and posturings, the belief in style as apart from thought and matter, the recurrence to the ideals of the past not because they were true but because they were soothing and pretty,—all of which bulked largely in the later developments of the romantic movement, and are sufficiently evident even in her great contemporary, Chateaubriand. Still more important is the debt that France owes to her openness of mind, to the zeal with which she strove to break down the "Chinese wall" which, as she complains, had been built up between France and the rest of Europe, to the energy with which she set herself to show what the literature of her own country might draw from the new spirit and the new ideals which had stirred England and Germany to their depths. It is true that Germany had but little influence upon the subsequent course of the romantic movement in France. But the great need was to shake the imperturbable self-satisfaction of French classicism. And in this task she did yeoman's service. It is not so much by *Delphine* and *Corinne*, as by her political and critical works, above all by *De l'Allemagne*, that she takes place in the literary history of Europe.

Chateaubriand.

Of the three writers now before us, the last, Chateaubriand, filled by far the largest space in the mind of his contemporaries, and has left by far the deepest mark on the

literature of his country. This is not merely the result of accident; of his long life (1768-1848); or of the prominent and honourable part which he played in politics. It is due, above all, to his brilliant originality. No writer since Rousseau had opened so many fresh fields to the imagination of his countrymen; none had approached him in mastery of style. A critic might plead that the elements of his strange genius were imperfectly blended; he might doubt whether all of them were so spontaneous, so genuinely sprung from the heart, as the author would have us to believe. But he could never question their presence, nor deny that they worked with electric force upon the generation that followed.

The genius of Chateaubriand was late in ripening, and, when it did ripen, broke on the world with the suddenness of a Siberian spring. Apart from the *Mémoires d'Outre-tombe*—and even they were begun before the fall of Napoleon—all his best work was published within the space of little more than a year:[1] *Atala* in 1801, *René* and *Le Génie du Christianisme* — of which *René*, like *Atala*, at one

[1] It is right to say that much of it goes back, in some form or other, to a considerably earlier date. Thus *Atala* was first written in 1791; but Chateaubriand himself states that one striking passage, the death of Atala, was entirely rewritten for publication; and it may be suspected that the whole work went through unsparing revision. *René*, again, must go back to the years of *Les Natchez* (1793-98); for both it and *Atala* were fragments of that "epic" before they were worked into *Le Génie*. *Le Génie* was begun in 1798, and large parts of it were printed in London (1800) before the author returned to France; but we know that the book was largely rewritten for publication in 1802.

time formed part — in 1802. His later works, memorable though they are, can hardly, with the exception of the *Mémoires*, be said to add anything substantial to our impression of his powers. The most important of them are *Les Martyrs* (1807), *L'Itinéraire de Paris à Jérusalem* (1811), and *Les Aventures du dernier Abencerage* (1826).

His relation to Rousseau: René.

Chateaubriand, like Madame de Staël, traces back his descent to Rousseau—not, however, to the thinker so much as to the poet; not to the *Contrat Social* so much as to the *Confessions*, the *Rêveries*, and the second of the Discourses. The first necessity of his being was to expand itself before the public; the first note of his genius, its brooding, yet passionate, individuality. *René*, under the thinnest of disguises, is François René de Chateaubriand. The author's weariness of life, his sense of the vanity of human things, are reflected and magnified in the character of his hero. In all this Chateaubriand was not merely following in the wake of the *Confessions*. He was moving a stage, and a long stage, farther along the path that Rousseau had struck out. It is one thing for an author to write, as Rousseau did with unflinching fidelity, the secret history of his own life for the world to judge; quite another to project a glorified portrait of himself upon the screen for the world to weep over and admire. The difference of artistic method is no less marked than that of moral intention. The hand of the painter has a freer sweep; his picture has a larger share of the ideal; the reader

comes to it with the feelings not of a judge, but a dispassionate onlooker. Hence it was that *René*, so skilfully drawn, reflecting so vividly a mood which, under one form or another, found a home in a thousand hearts, became the first of a long line: Harold, Manfred, Olympio, Rolla, and other "children of the century"; not to speak of his own forerunners, Werther and Faust. His figure, to readers of the present day, may well seem fainter than others of his race. He has not the spiritual doubts, the agonised despair, of these; nor the defiant revolt, the withering remorse, of those. But it is just here that his distinctive character is to be sought: in the vague sense of unrest and nothingness, in the weariness which does not spring from past labour or sorrow, in the melancholy for which no outward cause can be assigned. In the last resort this may be traceable to a half consciousness of weakness, to a sense of discord between the man and his surroundings or his natural task. Or it may spring from some entirely different cause. In any case, it was undoubtedly a marked feature of the generations immediately before and after Chateaubriand. It was not unknown to Goethe. It may even have blended with the sharper and more specific malady of Byron and George Sand. But nowhere is it painted with more force and fidelity than in *René;* and one can only regret that the picture, which might well have been left to stand on its own merits, is reinforced by a rather unpleasing and not altogether relevant love-story.

If the individuality of the writer, his "ennui" and melancholy, is the chief theme of *René*, quite a different note, though again one which recalls the voice of Rousseau, is struck in *Atala*. Here it is the "noble savage," the forests and prairies of the New World, the passions which tear the heart of man in all climes and ages, the warning voice of religion which strives to keep them within bounds, that Chateaubriand sets before us. And of all his imaginative works, this surely is the most original and the best. The theme is the simplest; the descriptive genius of the author has freer scope; the style is richer and more rhythmical than in any other of his writings. In the two latter points it marks what may fairly be called a new departure in French literature; Rousseau and, so far as description is concerned, Bernardin de Saint-Pierre alone having prepared the ground. Here, however, the descriptions are more the bone and tissue of the piece; and, as the nature of the landscape demanded, they are more glowing than anything to be found even in Rousseau.[1] The same thing applies

Atala, and later romances.

[1] The following lines from another work, describing a night spent on the borders of Niagara, may be quoted: "Tantôt la lune reposait sur un groupe de nuages, qui ressemblait à la cime de hautes montagnes couronnées de neige. Peu à peu ces nues s'allongeaient, se déroulaient en zones diaphanes et onduleuses de satin blanc, ou se transformaient en légers flocons d'écume, en innombrables troupeaux, errant dans les plaines bleues du firmament."—See *Souvenirs d'Italie, Amérique*, &c., t. i., p. 211. The passage suggests a comparison with Rousseau's description of a night spent "à la belle étoile" on the banks of the Rhone.

to the style. It has not the plangent note of the later writings of Rousseau; still less has it the triumphant march of the *Contrat Social.* But in colour and music it commands resources which no writer had yet discovered in the language. It points forward to the day of *Notre Dame* and *Les Lettres d'un Voyageur.* Apart from the style, it is the picture of the virgin forests and prairies of the Mississippi, and of the Red Indians who wandered among them, by which *Atala* takes rank. And here again the influence of Rousseau is not to be mistaken. The abstract savage of the second Discourse has taken flesh and blood. The writer has crossed the Atlantic to meet him face to face; and the scenes through which he roves are painted from the life. The sober colouring of the Jura and lower Alps is exchanged for the gloom and glow of the primeval forest and its luxuriant vegetation. But the impulse which sent Chateaubriand on pilgrimage was the same that had made Rousseau a wanderer among men. He had the same contempt for the conventions and artifices of society; the same love of solitude; the same craving for the primitive and the unsophisticated,—for that which seems to come to us direct "from the hand of the Creator." Of the later romances, *Le dernier Abencerage* (published 1826, written "nearly twenty years earlier") is that which approaches most nearly to the level of *Atala;* and it contains one of the too rare lyrics—"Combien j'ai douce souvenance"—which prove how completely the author was master not only of the spirit, but

the forms, of poetry. Save for the name and the date, one might almost believe it to have come from the hand of Hugo or Musset. *Les Martyrs*, in spite of its eloquence and the brilliance of its descriptions, is hardly of the same rank. There is more appearance of effort and, in point of style, too obvious an echo of *Télémaque*. This, no doubt, has its significance. From the first Chateaubriand had instinctively shrunk from that side of romanticism which borders on realism, from that form of romance which absorbs realism as an element. In the preface to *Atala*—and the passage is repeated elsewhere in his works—he had written as follows: "The Muses are heavenly beings, who do not disfigure their features with grimaces. When they weep, it is with the secret desire of displaying their beauty." Through the richness of form and colour, which constitute the essence of romance, he never ceased to seek the ideal type of beauty; and, for all his romanticism, it was this that drew him irresistibly to the poets of classical antiquity. Their influence was hardly less strong on him than upon Chénier, though it worked in a less direct and subtler manner. It gave simplicity and dignity alike to the style, conception, and execution of his imaginative work. It saved him from the extravagances which beguiled a later and more combative generation. And if, as in *Les Martyrs*, he failed sometimes to distinguish between the true classicism and the false; if, as in his critical writings, he was troubled by sharp returns of injustice to Shakespeare and

other heroes of romance,—these are the defects of his qualities, and must not be too bitterly resented.

Le Génie.

In *Le Génie du Christianisme*, Chateaubriand breaks entirely fresh ground. It is probable that no apologetic of modern times has left a deeper or wider impression. Issued within a few days of the publication of the Concordat (Easter, 1802), it appeared, as the author says, "exactly at the right moment." For nearly ten years the Catholic religion had been more or less proscribed, and its priests subjected to cruel outbursts of persecution. Now the tide was about to turn. Chateaubriand caught it at the flow, and did more than any other man to swell its advance. Nor was this due only to the passion with which he threw himself into the cause. It would be the height of injustice not to admit the originality and persuasive force of his argument. Casting aside the scholastic pleas which had hitherto formed the staple of such apologies, from the first page he takes wider and, for his own purpose, more commanding ground. The religious instinct, he urges, is bound up with all that is deepest and strongest in man's nature. It is not only the final, and most essential, sanction of his moral duties. It is interwoven with his most sacred memories; it supplies at once the theme and the warrant of all that appeals most keenly to his imagination. It is on the two latter points, the emotional and imaginative value of religion, that he lays the greatest stress. It is this which constitutes the high originality of his treatise. The line of argument is hardly one that would have been chosen by one who

loved truth for her own sake. The arbiter throughout is not reason but feeling. Yet it is just to remember that the circumstances were exceptional. The revolutionists—on great provocation, doubtless—had oppressed the Church relentlessly. It was inevitable that, when their power was broken, the old feelings and habits of men should reassert themselves with irresistible force. It was to this spontaneous upheaval of long stifled emotion that Chateaubriand gave voice. And, even apart from personal reasons,[1] he would have been more than human had not emotion borne the chief part in his plea. Even with this allowance, the argument, in at least one crucial point, is more than open to question. Much, perhaps most, of it is directed to prove the necessity of religion in the vaguest and most general sense. Yet the general upshot of the whole is to recommend the doctrine, ritual, and priestly authority of one particular form of it, Catholicism. It is difficult not to regard this as a French variation on the British truculence of Mr Thwackum. And the later volumes of the *Mémoires* lead one to suspect that the author himself may at moments have shrunk from the consequences of his plea. Yet, with all abatements, *Le Génie* remains a highly remarkable achievement,—the first of a long line of apologies which have put a new face on the relations between Christianity and modern thought. For that very

[1] The many deaths in his family, two of which had been executed during the Terror, while others, including his mother and sister, were imprisoned. "J'ai pleuré et j'ai cru" is his account of his conversion.—*Mémoires*, t. ii., pp. 134, 135.

reason it was at first regarded somewhat askance by the more orthodox school of Catholics. A curious monument of this feeling is to be found in *Le véritable Génie du Christianisme*, published for the French emigrants in London (1802) by Peltier, formerly editor of *Les Actes des Apôtres*, the wittiest of the royalist organs during the early stages of the Revolution, and now of *L'Ambigu*, whose attacks were one of the chief grievances of Napoleon against the Government of Britain. The book is a reprint of the most famous writings of Bossuet; and it testifies to the discontent of primitive orthodoxy with the innovations of Chateaubriand.

Chateaubriand as critic.

Le Génie, however, is not merely a landmark in the history of European thought and religious feeling. It is no less notable in the history of romance. It presents many of the glowing landscapes which have been already mentioned in connection with *Atala;* and it opens an entirely new vein of literary criticism. On the former point there is no need to dwell further. The latter has a twofold bearing on our subject. In the first place, Chateaubriand, if not the earliest, was among the earliest to compare works of imagination from the point of view of the ideas which underlie and inspire them.[1] The danger of this method lies in the temptation to which the critic exposes himself of estimating imaginative creation rather by the truth, or supposed truth, of the ideas it embodies than by the success of the poet in giving them adequate expression. And from this danger Chateaubriand has by no means

[1] Two books of *Le Génie*, considerably more than a third of the whole work, are devoted to these questions.

escaped. There must, the reader instinctively feels, be something wrong in a method which ends in placing *Zaïre* above the *Iliad*, and *Alzire* on a level with the *Odyssey*. For all this, it would be unjust to deny that a new weapon of criticism is here grasped by Chateaubriand; and that, in the hands of one less consumed by the zeal of the Lord's house, such a method may lead, and has not seldom actually led, to results of great value. And, though the results of Chateaubriand may sometimes startle us, it was an inestimable service to free criticism from the merely verbal and formal questions with which the Augustans had concerned themselves—to insist that the first business of the reader is to throw himself into the life and thought and atmosphere of the poet he would judge. Doubtless, his own sympathy, as romanticist, with the past rendered this task peculiarly congenial to our author. But that is precisely what makes him so important. Nothing had been so fatal to Augustan criticism as its contempt for all that was "barbarous" and "Gothic." And this pitiful contempt received its death-blow from Chateaubriand.

As to the second point, Chateaubriand was again among the first to call criticism from the narrow and barren task of finding fault to the far higher task of "appreciating beauties." To seize on that which is best—and this commonly means that which is most distinctive and original—in a given writer, and to show its full bearing and significance,—that is the ideal of modern criticism. And among those who built up this ideal, Chateaubriand may claim an hon-

oured place by the side of Goethe and Charles Lamb and Coleridge. A glance at the Preface to *Cromwell* will show how deeply the later romanticists of France were indebted to him on this point, as on so many others.

His importance in the history of romance.

It will be seen that, of the three writers who form the subject of this section, Chateaubriand contributed by far the most to the advancing tide of romance; that he is, perhaps, the only one who, in the full sense, can be called romantic. In his reversion to mediævalism, he follows, it need hardly be said with a difference, the path which had already been trodden by Goethe in Germany and by Coleridge in England. By his love of outward nature and his genius for giving the glow of colour or the spell of mystery to her more unfamiliar aspects, he again ranges himself with Coleridge, and with Wordsworth as he was in those moments when he approached most closely to the romantic spirit. Finally, in his world-weariness and brooding melancholy, he recalls, again with a difference, the *Werther* of Goethe, and strikes the note which was to be given back with resonant echo from the poetry of Byron.[1] In one respect, it must be added, he stands alone. By *Le Génie du Christianisme* he exercised a direct influence on the religious feeling of his generation, to which, except possibly in the case of Coleridge, there is nothing analogous in the history of his time. And this too, for good or for evil, was among the workings of romance.

[1] A curious passage on Byron, and his debt to Chateaubriand, will be found in the *Mémoires*, vol. ii.

Among the writers of the Republic and Empire there remain three who stand apart from the rest; two of them, at any rate, anticipating in a marked degree the thought and sentiment of the period which was to follow. These are Joubert, Senancour, and Joseph de Maistre.

Joubert, Senancour.

The two former need not detain us long. Both, in different ways, embody the discouragement, the paralysis of energy, which not unnaturally followed on the extravagant hopes of the Revolution. Joubert (1754-1824) is known only by his *Maximes*, religious, moral, and literary, which were edited after his death, first by Chateaubriand (1838), then by Raynal (1842). This form of literature, in which the French stand almost alone, is only tolerable when it crystallises a highly distinctive outlook upon life in a perfectly chiselled style. With the latter of these conditions Joubert not seldom complies; and in his literary maxims—for instance, those on the Greek and the Latin genius, or again, to take a very different illustration, on the spirit of Voltaire — he fulfils the former also. Even in the moral maxims the thought is often ingenious, sometimes profoundly true. But it lacks the seal of a vigorous character and intellect. And for that reason Joubert can hardly be placed among the supreme masters of the Maxim: not with Vauvenargues, still less with La Rochefoucault or Pascal. Far more distinctive is the work of Senancour (1779-1846). His chief book, *Obermann* (1804), is the history of a soul severed from the world and striving to live its own life face to face

with nature. The void of such a life, the discouragement and weariness which fall upon it but never entirely overcome it, are painted with extraordinary force. And in its "profound inwardness," if not in its "austere sincerity," it anticipates by five-and-twenty years the mood which, with a far stronger leaven of passion, was one of the chief sources of the "literature of despair." Hence the deep hold which it had on George Sand and, at a later time, on Arnold.[1] That is its chief importance to the literary historian. But even those who care little for such history can hardly fail to be arrested by the unaffected truthfulness with which a unique, if morbid, experience is recorded.

Joseph de Maistre.

Lack of vigour is the last charge that can be brought against de Maistre (1753-1821).[2] The most combative of writers, his life was one long challenge to the accepted dogmas of his day. The glove was first thrown down in *Considérations sur la France* (1796); and this was followed by *Le Principe Générateur des Constitutions Politiques* (1809) and *Le Pape* (1819); not to mention other works of less importance. It was the mission of de Maistre to pour scorn on the Revolution, and on the beliefs, political, moral, and religious, which lay behind it. And, gifted as he

[1] The usual edition of *Obermann* has a Preface of great interest by George Sand, who makes a comparison between Senancour, Chateaubriand, and Byron. The two poems of Arnold, with the appreciation contained in their notes, make it unnecessary to say more.

[2] Joseph, the elder brother of Xavier, de Maistre was by birth a Savoyard; and his life was passed, first as Judge, then (after the Revolution) as Ambassador, in the service of the King of Sardinia.

was with an unerring instinct for fastening on the vital points at issue between the combatants, as well as with a style abounding in vigour and sparkle, he performed the task to perfection. The pity is that these great qualities should be wedded to a love of paradox, not to say a genius for sophistry,[1] which goes far to destroy their value, and which, lovingly fostered, strengthened its hold upon him with each succeeding publication. The whole system of de Maistre springs, in the last resort, from two seminal ideas: the idea of Sovereignty and the idea of the State as a natural organism, whose growth is determined by original character and by historical conditions. Of these, the latter is by far the more pregnant and deep-reaching. But as time went on, it came more and more, in the mind of the author, to be overshadowed by the former. It is, therefore, in the earlier works that his better self is to be found. The abstract man of Rousseau and the "philosophers," he argues, has no existence. Man is always the product of a particular country and particular institutions; "a Frenchman, an Italian, a Russian"; not a man pure and simple.[2] From this it follows that no "constitution," which rests on the assumption that man is a being of pure reason, without passions and without a distinctive temperament,

His idea of the State.

[1] See, for instance, his *Lettres sur l'Inquisition Espagnole* (1815), in which he proves, to his own satisfaction, that the Inquisition "is by its nature good, mild, and conservative, which is the unvarying and indelible character of all ecclesiastical institutions."—Letter I. (p. 225; ed. Brussels, 1844.)

[2] *Considérations*, p. 70.

is worth the paper on which it is written; nay, that the very attempt to commit it to paper, to embody it in a formal document, is an infallible mark of folly and incapacity. The true constitution of a nation is not that which is made, but that which grows; which has been formed slowly and silently, and for that very reason has become one with the very life of the people, both individually and collectively. Any endeavour to alter the direction of that growth, to destroy any of its old conditions, or to put new ones in their stead, is foredoomed to failure. And of this there can be no proof more startling than the rapid succession of constitutions in France during the revolutionary ferment—three, if not four, within the space of five years—and the enormous number of paper laws, at the rate of ninety-five to two hundred for every month, which are presented for our admiration.[1] Growth, development, progress there undoubtedly is. The very analogy of the natural organism both admits this and proclaims it. But it must be growth within the limits of the original character and the acquired characteristics; a growth silent as that of the grass, not noisy with the crash of machinery or the shouts of windy declamation.[2]

Of Sovereignty: Le Pape.

In this there is much truth, though the latter part of it suffers from the same fallacy that has already met us in Burke: the assumption that the direction and limits of a nation's growth are unalterably fixed from the beginning;

[1] *Considérations*, pp. 72, 73. *Principe Générateur*, pp. 167-176.
[2] *Considérations*, pp. 66, 67, 89. *Principe Générateur*, p. 184.

that to remove the most glaring defects is a task entailing more evil than good; that to introduce new elements of life is either impossible, or is more likely than not to end in death.[1] All these objections, however, are as nothing when compared with those raised, at least in its later developments, by the doctrine of Sovereignty. Like Rousseau, de Maistre is convinced that every political community has an inherent right—a right limited only by considerations of justice and expediency—to control the members who compose it. Unlike Rousseau, he places this control not in the people at large, but the executive.[2] And, for reasons which lay very close to his heart, to him the only full and perfect form of executive is monarchy. It is a monarch only who, especially in a large State, can secure unity. It is only through monarchy that the State can place itself on the same level of divine sanction as the Church. And since, in its essence, the life of the State is religious, or is nothing,—since, moreover, all the great States of modern Europe, and none more clearly than France, were founded by the Church—it is only logical that the inner truth of things should find expression in their outward organisation.[3] In any case, the authority of the Church—and that is explicitly declared to mean the Papacy—remains, in the last resort, intact over the State. It is in the spiritual sovereignty of the Pope that the civil power finds its only full sanc-

[1] *Principe Générateur*, pp. 196-200.
[2] *Le Pape*, pp. 19-23.
[3] *Principe Générateur*, pp. 163, 179, 180. *Le Pape*, p. 140.

tion and consecration. It is to that sovereignty alone that the dispensing power, in those rare cases when its exercise is necessary for the protection of subjects against their civil sovereign, can safely be entrusted.[1]

His relation to Burke.

Apart from its ecclesiastical bias, which threw it out of date from the beginning, this argument is hardly to be reconciled with that which has already been considered. The earlier argument was essentially historical in character. De Maistre, like Burke, condemned innovations in the name of human nature and the unbroken record of experience. Here, however, he turns round, and, in spite of all efforts to disguise it, suddenly presents us with the principle of divine right: the divine right of the monarch which, once established, is treated as sacrosanct for all time; the divine right of the Papacy, consecrated by a grant direct from heaven.[2] Qualifications, no doubt, there are; and it is only fair to say that they are dictated, not only by the caution, but the honesty, of the writer.[3] But the effect of these is rather to weaken the force of the abstract argument than to reconcile it with the historical plea of which it is supposed to be the sequel. It is in that historical plea that the author is at his best. There lies his

[1] *Le Pape*, pp. 126, 137, 140, 157-160, 233.

[2] This is supplemented in a later writing by the famous description of the Hangman as the "corner-stone of civil society." See *Soirées de St Petersbourg*, chaps. i. and vii. The paradox would have delighted Hobbes, between whom and de Maistre an instructive parallel might be drawn.

[3] *Le Pape*, pp. 214-224, 225-237, 320-327.

substantial service to European thought. To readers of the day, who were little acquainted with Burke, he doubtless seemed even more original than he is. And neither in range nor in depth, neither in speculative genius nor in the imaginative power which clothes the skeleton of abstruse argument with flesh and blood, are even his highest achievements, the *Considérations* and *Le Principe Générateur*, to be compared with the *Reflections*, which preceded the one by six and the other by close on twenty years. But the lesson was none the worse for being repeated. And, however much he may have owed to Burke's instruction, no one can deny that de Maistre had made it entirely his own, or that he expounded it in a style of extraordinary brilliance. In speculative matters he marks, among French writers, that revolt against the spirit and methods of the eighteenth century which, in the domain of pure literature, is bound up with the names of Chateaubriand and Madame de Staël.

Reaction towards Classicism.

Looking back over the period we have traversed, we can hardly fail to recognise a case of arrested development. During the years immediately preceding the Revolution, the air was full of revolt against the classical canons. All the more vigorous minds were in eager quest of new forms, new methods, new sources of inspiration. With the Revolution and the wars that followed, the tide suddenly turned. The search for new light still continued; but it was confined to the small band of literary, and for the most part

political, rebels. The mass of cultured opinion was now thrown into the opposite scale. And in this scale it remained until the approach of the great uprising in 1830. The cause of this change is not far to seek. The Revolution directed the minds of men into other channels. The classical ideal, which it brought into politics, was not unnaturally smuggled back into literature also. Finally, the Empire, jealous by its very nature of new ideas and intellectual independence, imposed a yoke upon men's minds which only the most vigorous were capable of throwing off. The result was that, as Napoleon himself was fain to lament, the literary annals of the Empire are, if we except the work of the two great rebels, inexpressibly barren. And the same causes, with the same effects, continued to operate, though with diminished force, during the Restoration. So it was that the gradual emancipation, which promised so fair before the Revolution, was suddenly suspended. And when the forces of progress were again set free, it was inevitable that they should take the road of violent innovation. The literary upheaval of 1830, as Hugo always insisted, was the counterpart of the political upheaval of 1789.

Italy.

The story of Italian literature in the last quarter of the eighteenth century presents one marked peculiarity. In England, France, and Germany the men of genius, at least in their earlier and more spontaneous works, were with one accord whole-hearted for romance. In Italy, too, the romantic leaven was astir. But the one man of

genius whom the period produced was decisively classical in his bent,—perhaps the greatest of those who in modern times have followed the classical ideal. Hence, by the accident of genius, the romantic movement was unexpectedly set back. Had the great powers of Alfieri been thrown into the other scale, the history of these years would have been strangely different.

Three great figures stand out in the literature of the earlier part of the century. Of these, Vico had now (1775) been dead for thirty years (1744), while Metastasio and Goldoni still survived—the former till 1782, the latter till 1793. The labours of both, however, were at an end. The last works of Metastasio, who since 1730 had resided at Vienna, were written before 1770. The last important work of Goldoni, *Il Burbero Benefico*, originally written in French as *Le Bourru Bienfaisant*, belongs to that year; and for the rest of his days he lived at Paris. For the moment, the stage was occupied by smaller men. It was occupied yet more by the various academies and literary clubs which, always strong in Italy, never perhaps flourished so abundantly as during the eighteenth century. It is enough to mention the Florentine Accademia della Crusca, which has passed into a byword of classical pedantry; and the Società del Caffè, founded in 1764 at Milan.

Società del Caffè.

The latter, in particular through its Journal, *Il Caffè* (1764-66), was the chief channel through which a new stream of influence was brought into the literature of Italy—that of Vol-

taire and the Encyclopedists. The chief names connected with this movement are those of Algarotti, the two brothers Pietro and Alessandro Verri, and, above all, Beccaria, whose treatise, *Dei Delitti e delle Pene* (1765), forms the abiding monument of the Italian "enlightenment," and wielded a deep influence over the party of humanitarian reform throughout Europe.

The fruits of such a movement were, from the nature of the case, intellectual or political rather than literary; though it is significant that Beccaria brought many innovations, largely drawn from French sources, into the language; and that Alessandro Verri contributed to *Il Caffè* a spirited attack—of which, however, he subsequently repented—on the purist *Vocabulary* of Della Crusca. Yet it was from this small circle of Encyclopedists that Romanticism enlisted one of its earliest adherents, the same Alessandro Verri. It is with him and Cesarotti (1730-1808) that the early history of romance in Italy is mainly concerned.

In Italy, as elsewhere, translation played a large part in the beginnings of the romantic revival. And, as a translator, Cesarotti was indefatigable. As to his choice of subject he was by no means particular. If he took the semi-romantic *Sémiramis*, he took also the classical *Mahomet* and *Mort de César* from Voltaire (1762). Demosthenes and Juvenal may be regarded as neutral ground. But, in the main, he turned by preference to what may fairly be counted romantic

Romance: Cesarotti.

sources: to *Prometheus Vinctus* (1754), to the *Iliad*[1] (1786-1795), to Gray's *Elegy* (1772), and, far more significant than all of these, to Macpherson's *Ossian* (1763-1772). The last makes an epoch in the history of Italian literature. It opened the gates to the love of nature, the cult of melancholy, the memories of the past, which, here as elsewhere, formed the raw material of romance. The fame of Cesarotti's translation—skilfully varied from blank verse to ottava rima and lyric measures, according to the sense—spread far and wide through Italy. It has left unmistakable traces on the work of I. Pindemonte, of Monti, and, despite his denials, of Foscolo. But on no imagination did it fasten so deeply as on that of the young Corsican who was born between the dates of the two issues, and whose constant companion it was from Egypt to Saint Helena.[2]

Filosofia delle Lingue.

It would, however, be a grave injustice to consider Cesarotti merely as a translator. Apart from poems, which offer little worthy of notice, he is the author of a *Saggio sulla Filosofia delle Lingue* (1785), which is greatly in advance of its time. Language, he urges, is a thing of essentially spontaneous growth. All dialects, at the be-

[1] There are two *Iliads*: one faithful, in prose; the other (*La Morte di Ettore*), with considerable liberties, in verse. The latter is, what the author protested it was not, "a reckless graft of sacred on profane."

[2] Cesarotti always retained his interest in the primitive poetry of the smaller nations—*e.g.*, that of Illyria. See his letter to Herich: "La mia consanguinetà con Ossian forma un rapporto di cognazione tra lei e me."—*Opere*, xxxiii. 315.

ginning, are equally barbarous; it is only by the "shock" of one with the other that any advance is possible, or any chance of refinement and enrichment to be won. And the moment a language ceases to enrich itself by the incorporation of new words and new turns of speech—by drawing at once upon the "treasury" of kindred dialects, foreign languages, and, above all, upon the material offered by the unceasing progress of the arts and sciences—from that moment it must be accounted dead. Thus the recognition of a distinctively literary dialect, advantageous as it is in many ways and perhaps necessary, is manifestly beset with dangers. And those dangers can only be averted if the literary language is kept in the closest touch, on the one hand, with the language or languages of common speech; on the other hand, with the ever-widening experience of daily life and the new words or phrases in which our own or other nations have embodied it.[1] That these were burning questions in Italy, with its academical pedantries and its amazing wealth of competing dialects, may readily be imagined. And for the last fifty years they had been hotly debated: by Manni, for instance, and Rosasco, as champions of the Tuscan supremacy, on the one side; by Marcello, Zanotti, and the authors of *Il Caffè*, as defenders of liberty, upon the other.[2] But Cesarotti raised the debate to a higher level. With

[1] He suited the action to the word by a free coinage of compounds in his translations of Homer and Ossian: lungi-saittante, occhi-azzurro, gemmi-sparso, and the like.

[2] The battle had largely raged round the works of Goldoni, whose Venetian idiom offended the pedants.

him it ceases to be a mere battle of the dialects. It opens on the wider issues which, as Herder had already discerned, were bound up with much of what was most fruitful in the romantic revolution.

The cult of Ossian and the English was soon to be followed by an act of homage to the Germans. This was the work of Bertola, in his *Idea della Letteratura Alemanna* (1784). The critical part of this is slight, and can hardly be said to display much discernment. After a well-merited rebuke to those French critics, Bouhours and others, who had cast scorn on the literary efforts of the Germans, and a brief sketch of the Minnesingers and Meistersingers, he passes rapidly to the poets of the first half of the eighteenth century, lingering with peculiar affection on Haller and the other poets of nature. And with them, the writers who had themselves been moulded by Thomson and the English, it would seem that his admiration stopped. For the later outgrowths of German poetry, for the more original and romantic turn given to it by Lessing and Goethe, he shows but little sympathy. He is much shocked by the romanticism, such as it is, of *Emilia Galotti*,[1] and still more by the ruthless disregard of the unities and the generally "monstrous" characteristics which confronted him in *Götz*. It would have been interesting to learn what he thought of *Die Räuber*. But on that point he is discreetly silent, probably

Bertola.

[1] See, in addition to the *Idea*, his letter to Ippolito Pindemonte, of Dec. 15, 1783 (*Opere*, t. ii., pp. 235, 236).

from ignorance. It seems hardly credible that the same explanation should hold for his neglect of *Werther*. But the fact remains that the book which had gone the round of Europe finds no mention in his pages. The same love of the older fashions reappears in the translations, which form the most valuable part of the book, and are executed for the most part with uncommon skill. But the greatest names are ill represented; and, as a relief from twenty-seven of Gessner's Idylls, we have to be content with a single poem, *Das Veilchen*, by Goethe. Under these circumstances, it was inevitable that the fruits borne by Bertola's enterprise should be comparatively small. And it would be hazardous to assert that he did more than reinforce that love of the natural and idyllic which had already established itself in Italy, or that what was truly original and vital in the genius of Germany made itself felt in any Italian writer earlier than Foscolo.

A. Verri.

With Alessandro Verri (1741-1816) must close our sketch of the early stages of romance. His chief works are *Avventure di Saffo* (1780) and *Notti Romane* (1792-1804). Both bear witness to the influence of classical antiquity upon the romantic revival. The former is a romance on the life of the Lesbian poetess, containing some vivid passages of description and some fine translations from the fragments of her poetry. The latter is a series of imaginary discourses between the spirits of the great Romans, Cæsar and Brutus, the Gracchi, Cicero, and the rest. It is mainly remarkable for the description

of the opening of the tombs, which seems manifestly inspired by Dante, at the beginning; and the unexpected assault upon the "destructive genius" of the Romans, "oppressors upon system, great rather than good," at the close. It had, however, a great vogue in its own day, and later. Not only did it run through fifty editions in its own country, but it was translated into most languages of Western Europe. It is further significant of his place in the romantic movement that he should have made a translation of *Hamlet*, and begun one of *Othello*.

Classicism: Parini.

In Parini (1729-1799), the most accomplished artist among Italian poets of his time, we find a marked reversion to the classical tradition. Odes on Education, Imposture, Inoculation, a satire in four books on the social follies and corruptions of the day, — these bear the seal of their origin upon their face. Yet the style is so clear-cut and, in some of the odes at any rate, the hand of the poet is so firm, and his imagery so finely chiselled, as to deserve the name "classical" in the better sense—classical, that is, not after the fashion of the Augustans, but of antiquity; with a touch of Horace and even, at times, Schiller. In *Il Giorno*,[1] which is the most ambitious and the best known of his works, there is something of the same classical ring, though, from the nature of the case, in a lower key. The very title of the piece,

[1] The first part, *Il Mattino*, was published in 1763; the second, *Il Mezzogiorno*, in 1765. The other two were not published till after his death: *La Notte*, indeed, was never finished.

"the four parts of the day," is in all probability a sarcastic reference to the numerous poems of that name which the rather barren invention of early romance had devised as a counterpart to the four seasons of the year. But the artistic genius of Parini converted the mild sentiment of the descriptive poets into a brilliant series of cameos, representing the fashionable vices and follies of society. The dandy's toilet, the ministries of the *cavalier' servente*, the gluttony of the dinner-table, the afternoon drive, the rout, the grand lady's lap-dog,—all come in for their share of ridicule. And each picture is touched off with exquisite finish. Of all the satires of the century, it is that which most nearly recalls the atmosphere of the Latin poets. No doubt Parini is sometimes a victim to the perils of artificial diction. What is an unlucky poet to do when he has chosen to write of hair-powder and lace ruffles and strawberry ices? The wonder is rather that *Il Giorno* should contain so few of these elegant inanities. The only other of Parini's writings which need be mentioned is *I Principj della Lettere*, a rather vague treatise on the theory of imaginative art, which, in spite of certain compromises, embodies a tolerably complete acceptance of classical ideals.[1]

Later Romance: Casti.

Of the later romanticists belonging to our period, the most notable are Casti, the two brothers Pindemonte, Monti and Foscolo. Casti (1721-1813) is best known by his "zooepia,"

[1] A pleasing picture of Parini in his last years will be found in *Jacopo Ortis* (pp. 99-107: ed. Lemonnier, 1850).

Gli Animali Parlanti (1802). Its inordinate length—twenty-six cantos—makes it heavy reading; and the satire, political and social, good though it often is, inevitably becomes monotonous.[1] Its main interest for us lies in its more formal aspect; in its revival of the lighter vein of satire, so peculiarly suited to the Italian genius; in its reversion to the framework of the beast-epic, which was adopted about the same time in the "profane Bible" of Goethe, and which may fairly be regarded as a symptom of the poet's romantic leanings. A more distinctly romantic and a more lively, if less ambitious, performance is the earlier *Poema Tartaro.* Under a veil of Eastern scenery and a romantic story, it is in fact a biting satire on the Court and character of the Empress Catherine, which Casti studied from the life in 1778. Written in ottava rima, which he was afterwards to exchange for the sesta of his zooepia, it is chiefly interesting to the English reader for the influence which it clearly had on the general tone and on some of the incidents, particularly of course in the Russian cantos, of *Don Juan.* But, amusing as it is, it lacks the brilliance of the English poem; it lacks still more the scope and depth of Byron's satire. It forms, however, an important link in the chain of satire which comes down from Pulci, Ariosto, and Berni; which was taken up by Fortiguerri in his *Ricciardetto* (published 1736); and which attaches itself to our own literature by the great name of Byron.

[1] On account of its laboured satire, Grimm described it, not altogether unjustly, as "an intolerable poem."—*Reinhart Fuchs*, p. xi.

Of Ippolito Pindemonte it is not necessary to say much. He is the chief representative of the sentimental vein, which the Italians drew from Gray and Thomson, and, in a less degree, from Gessner. His chief work is *Le Poesie Campestri* (1785), and this was followed by *I Viaggi* (1793), a social satire, somewhat after the fashion of Cowper, with a distinct tinge of Parini. Bertola and Monti also wrote poems of sentiment; but they have other titles to fame.

I. Pindemonte.

Of Bertola something has already been said. It remains only to speak of Monti. On his work, as sentimental poet, there is no need to linger. The very titles of his pieces, *Entusiasmo malinconico*, and the rest, are enough to show the familiar vein in which he was working. In political poetry, satiric or otherwise, and in the drama he is more original. His work in the former field belongs to his later years; and it is chiefly memorable as a weather-chart of the storms through which Italy was passing, under stress of the Revolution in France. The earliest and best known of these occasional pieces is that on the death of Basville, the French envoy who was brutally assassinated at Rome a few days before the execution of Louis XVI. (January 1793). In this lurid performance Monti represents Voltaire, Rousseau, and other harbingers of the Revolution as marshalling the hosts of darkness against the life of the martyr king, while Pius VI., a second Moses, strives to animate the flagging ranks of the faithful. The papal efforts are in

Monti.

vain. And while the spirits of Damiens, Ravaillac, and other regicides exult around the scaffold, the mob surges up to lick the blood of its slaughtered benefactor. The poem — one of the many in terza rima produced at this epoch — excited angry protests from the Liberals, notably from Gianni and Salfi. The times speedily changed; and Monti, who was nothing if not a time-server, found no difficulty in changing with them. The *Bassvilliana* was reissued with a whole apparatus of palinodes; and the author, who had posed as the champion of the Church, now turns his thunders against "the nurse of all that is vile"; while the French, who in the original poem had figured as savages and infidels, are now hailed as the apostles of liberty and reason. From this sorry shuffling it is almost a relief to turn to *Il Bardo della Selva Nera* (1806), a fulsome epic in praise of "Napoleon the great," and in violent dispraise of his enemies; the "craven" Mack — the main theme of the poem is the Capitulation of Ulm,—the "perfidious king-minister" Pitt, and the "truculent hero" Nelson. This time the "chameleon poet" wrote in blank verse, with slight obligations to Ossian, and others of more significance to Gray. But for the most part the epic is furnished forth from the frippery of the classical wardrobe; and by far the best thing in it is a faithful version of Napoleon's famous indictment of the Directory.

The best work of Monti, however, was achieved in the drama, and belongs to the time before the political

storm had swept him from his moorings. The most characteristic of his tragedies is *Aristodemo*, which was first performed at Rome (1787) in the presence of Goethe. It was avowedly written in rivalry with the tragedies of Alfieri. But the contrast is far more striking than the resemblance. This appears in the easy, perhaps monotonous, flow of the verse. It appears still more in the romantic touches which are scattered throughout the play, and which are by no means always in harmony with the classical setting. That the hero should take his own life in remorse for a crime, if crime it were, committed many years earlier, is not only, as Goethe remarked at the time, an incident which no Italian audience was likely to comprehend, but one at which even the most sensitive of modern consciences is liable to be staggered, and which the robust conscience of the ancients would have found altogether absurd. And this is the central motive of the tragedy. Monti, doubtless by way of paying his court, would have had Goethe believe that the incident was prompted by *Werther*.[1] It is, indeed, nothing if not romantic. The same may be said of the supernatural terrors in which the play abounds; in particular, of the scene before the tomb of Dirce, which constitutes the fourth act, and is clearly suggested by *Sémiramis*. It is, in short, among the earliest, if not the earliest, of romantic tragedies that *Aristodemo* takes rank in the history of Italian literature.

Aristodemo.

The events of 1796 and the following years awak-

[1] See *Italienische Reise;* Goethe, *Werke*, xix. 140-42.

ened in the Italians for the first time the sense that they were a nation. And it was a sign full of promise for the future that, as in France, this feeling at once found voice in the drama. The worn-out plots were replaced by themes of living interest. The rigid mould of the classical drama was violently broken up. The *Caio Gracco* of Monti (1800), in which benevolent critics have traced the influence of Shakespeare's historical plays, is, in some faint degree, an instance of this. A more pronounced, if cruder, example is to be found in the tragedies of Giovanni Pindemonte. The earliest of these — though the author, under the name of his valet, had already put romantic dramas, *Ginevra di Scozia* (1795) and others, upon the stage—is *Orso Ipato* (1797). The scene is laid among the lagoons. The plot turns upon the successful resistance of Rivo Alto, the future Venice, to the usurpations of the tyrant of Eraclea. Written in the very year of Campo Formio, the play is one long appeal to the glorious past of "the eldest child of liberty." And it must have been a bitter awakening when the man, who came as sworn foe to the tyranny of the oligarchy, ended by handing over Venice to the fetters of Austria. Apart from the lively interest of the matter, *Orso* has many other features of the romantic drama. The frequency of the stage directions, the elaboration of the scenery — a palace, a piazza, a church, a garden, the lagoons,—above all, the violence of the action—the last act positively reeks with corpses,—all point this way: they are

G. Pindemonte: Jacobin dramas.

qualities which reappear in the romantic drama of France. In *Adelina e Roberto* the author appeals still more directly to the passions of the hour, and plunges still more violently into romantic methods. Once again, his subject is the struggle for national independence — this time, of the United Provinces against Spain. But this theme is interlaced, as was natural enough, with the atrocities of the Inquisition; and the play ends in a general slaughter of "the tyrants, the impostors and the ribalds"; that is, of the inquisitors and the Spaniards. It may further be noted that the unity of place, which in the previous play had been observed at least according to the letter, is here rudely cast aside; and the scene shifts from a cottage on the banks of the Meuse to the dungeon of the heretic, to the council-room of the Holy Office, to the chamber of torture, and finally to the scaffold by the seashore, with a boldness which leaves nothing to be desired. Nor is it without significance that in this play, as in the *Gracco* of Monti, the influence of Joseph Chénier is clearly to be detected.

Foscolo: Jacopo Ortis.

The first work, however, in which the passions and resentments of these years found direct expression—and it is also the first, and indeed the only, work which sweeps us into the full tide of romance—is *Le Ultime Lettere di Jacopo Ortis*, by Foscolo (1776-1827). Written under the bitter disillusionment which followed the betrayal of Campo Formio, it was not published —and even then in the face of great difficulties

—till 1802.[1] In form and subject, notwithstanding the author's efforts to deny it, it is clearly modelled upon *Werther*, and, like *Werther*, it ends in suicide. But the character of the hero has a far deeper strain of passion than his German original. And the style throughout is more trenchant; as some critics prefer to say, more emphatic. Without pressing a vain dispute of words, it may fairly be said that there is nothing in the style which is not in complete accordance with the given character of the hero, and that Foscolo would have known his business uncommonly ill if he had made his Italian a mere echo of Goethe's German. The truth is that the political setting and the vehemence of the principal character unite to put an entirely new face upon the old theme; and that with all its debts to Goethe and, in a far less degree, to Gray, *Ortis* remains a work of striking originality. The denunciation of the wrongs of Italy and of society at large is strangely impressive; and in the more idyllic scenes, which are laid among the Euganean hills, there is wonderful charm. The high promise of this romance was hardly to be borne out by the subsequent works of the author. In his dramas he halts uneasily between the two opinions, classical and romantic; at one moment a disciple of Alfieri, at the next an ardent devotee of the new model. And *I Sepolcri* is rather the work of a great patriot than of a poet. As a patriot, indeed, he is one of the few men who stood the test of that time of

[1] This was the first authentic edition. Garbled versions had appeared in 1799 and the intervening years.

trial,[1] and he is justly revered as the prophet of Italian unity and independence. After an ill-starred attempt to raise Venice against Austria in 1814, he was driven into exile. And his closing years were devoted to studies of Petrarch, Boccaccio and Dante. For our purpose, however, he lives as the one author who, alike in thought and style, was heart and soul a romantic; a disciple of the earlier Goethe, a precursor of George Sand and the men of 1830.

Thus far the history of Romance in Italy. Its fruits, so far as our period is concerned, are rather in promise than performance. It was reserved for the next generation to complete the work of which we have here sketched the beginning. The *Carmagnola* of Manzoni was published in 1820, *Adelchi* in 1822, *I Promessi Sposi* in 1827. And the poems of Leopardi, which, "classical" as they may be in form, are steeped through and through with the romantic spirit, belong to the same years.

Alfieri.

The most commanding figure of the period, however, is yet behind — Alfieri (1749-1803). His character is at least as striking as his literary work. Imperious, fiery, a rebel by nature, he was probably more framed for a life of action than for one of thought and imagination, and, like Byron, he never ceased to reckon the latter infinitely beneath the former. But in Italy, as it then was, all avenues to action were cut off,

[1] On this account he was bitterly assailed by Monti and other weathercocks.

at least for one to whom the courtier's arts were odious and contemptible. And, after some years of rather aimless wandering and passionate quest of love, Alfieri threw himself, with the abruptness which marked all his resolves, into the life of study and imagination, sustained by a devotion, in which he never afterwards wavered, to the Countess of Albany, wife of the Young Pretender. This was in 1775-77. And for the next dozen years he poured out an unbroken stream of tragedies which, to the number of nineteen, were finally collected and published in 1789.[1] The labour involved in the composition of these plays was untold. For the author was forced to begin by mastering the literature of his own land, and learning the very language in which he was to write, his earliest plays having been first actually written in French prose. But he threw himself into the task with the same ardour which had hitherto made him one of the most reckless riders and duellists of his day. And if the earlier plays may be charged with torturing the language—and the inversions are doubtless often extremely harsh,—this defect would seem to have been at least greatly softened as time went on. It is far less noticeable in *Saul* and *Mirra* than in *Filippo* or *Polinice*. And it is closely bound up with his just hatred of the effeminacy and "nervelessness" into which the language of Italian poetry, and above all of Italian tragedy, had sunk, and which he was never weary of contrasting with the energy and

[1] The first ten had already appeared, in two instalments, in 1783.

"ferocity" of the speech of Dante. If we compare his harshness with the "languor and triviality" even of the best of his contemporaries—of Monti, for instance, or Giovanni Pindemonte,—we shall feel that much is to be forgiven to him.

His genius in classical Tragedy.

As to matter, his tragedies, at their best, stand in no need of such allowance. Working within the strict bounds of the classical drama, and adhering rigorously to the unity of time though not always that of place, he fulfils the classical ideal more completely than any other modern writer. He shows not merely a splendid mastery of action and situation, but also a grip of character which might well have been thought beyond the reach of his limited resources. The force of classical tragedy, it may fairly be said, depends first and foremost upon the choice of a situation which shall bring the personages of the drama into instant conflict. Herein lies the supreme power of the Greek dramatists, and of Racine among the moderns. And in this faculty Alfieri must surely be reckoned to rival, if not to surpass, Racine himself. Now this concentration upon the situation undoubtedly tends to exclude any such development of the characters as is found in the romantic drama. This was explicitly recognised by Aristotle in his analysis of Greek tragedy: it is borne out by the practice of the Greek dramatists. Of later dramatists according to the classical type, Racine alone had, to some extent, succeeded in overcoming the difficulty. And even Racine must yield the palm to Alfieri. The types of character the latter

loves to select are so marked, the passions by which they are moved so strong, that every turn of the action presents them in a new light, and throws them into more and more prominent relief. It would be difficult to name any dramatist in whom the action is so serried, or the shock and counter-shock of the characters so rapid and so intense. This is marked in the extraordinary compression of the plot and the extremely small number of the personages. The latter rarely exceed five, and are not seldom as few as four, while in length these plays hardly ever reach 1500 lines, and often fall short of this limit very far; a result on which it is clear that the author prided himself not a little, applying the knife ruthlessly at each fresh revision and complacently recording the final number to which he reduced himself in several passages of his *Life*. Thus, by eschewing all ornament, by rigorously cutting away all save the bone and muscle of dramatic action, he was able to give to the classical form something of the life and fulness of Romance.

Greek and historical subjects.

It remains true that, with certain reservations to be mentioned directly, the classical strain prevails decisively over the rest. The greatest triumphs of the poet are won, for the most part, in themes already treated by his Greek forerunners. And when he turns, as he does in two of his finest pieces (*Filippo* and *Don Garcia*), to themes which may fairly be counted of romantic import, the method, as opposed to the matter, is just as classical as in those which he drew from the repertory of Athens. In truth, it can-

not be said that there is anything in the classical model which, of necessity, bars out presentment of character. The mere limits of space, no doubt, not to mention the further restrictions involved in the "unities" (particularly that of time), make it impossible that the classical drama should ever vie with the romantic in this respect. But *Agamemnon*, *Antigone*, and *Œdipus Rex* are in themselves sufficient proof that the difference is one of degree rather than of kind. The real danger lies in the opening which the classical type gives to rhetorical declamation, and this danger only the greatest genius, and in its happiest moments, is able to surmount. And it is because he set his face against this temptation from the outset that Alfieri, in his treatment of character no less than in the outward machinery of his plays, may claim to have reverted to the purest form of classical tragedy, and to be the opponent only of the spurious imitation; or rather, to have reached the point at which, in principle, the classical and the romantic dramas are at one.

The strange thing is that, when he wrote his tragedies, Alfieri was altogether ignorant of Greek, and does not even seem, as a general rule, to have consulted translations. This was not, perhaps, entirely a disadvantage. It enabled him to treat the well-worn themes with such freedom that they became a new creation in his hands. A glance at *Polinice*, or *Antigone*, or *Oreste* will suffice to establish this. The one ancient dramatist within his reach was Seneca; and, except in the sententious style which he sometimes adopts, and with conspicuous success, it cannot be

said that Seneca had any influence upon his mind.[1] The rhetoric, the fustian, and the melodrama of the Roman were not only foreign but hateful to his genius. This appears even in his weaker plays; in those, that is, where the subject, the praise of liberty, is more abstract, and therefore lends itself more readily to rhetorical treatment. It cannot be said that such plays—*Virginia*, *Bruto*, *Timoleone*, *Agide*—are at all equal to the more dramatic pieces. But at least mere rhetoric is avoided.

Romantic elements in his Plays.

So far we have spoken of those tragedies, and they are the great majority, which are decisively classical in tone. There are others, however, which, though still classical in form, approach in spirit more closely to the romantic order. The most notable of these are *Saul* and *Mirra*, both composed comparatively late (1782-85). Here the author is content to dispense with action and to paint mood or character directly, without the aid of any such medium. Many have held that his powers are here seen at their highest; and it is recorded that Byron was overcome, even to convulsions, at the representation of *Mirra*. There can be no doubt that Alfieri, both here and in the last act of *Maria Stuarda*, reveals a lyric quality, alike in spirit and expression, which could never have been inferred from his more classical pieces. Yet it is hard

[1] "La lettura di Seneca m'infiammò e sforzò d'ideare ad un parto le due gemelle tragedie, *l'Agamennone* e *l'Oreste*. Non mi pare con tutto ciò ch'elle mi siano riuscite in nulla un furto fatto da Seneca." *Vita*, ep. iv. cap. 2.

not to regret the distinctively dramatic genius, so strong in his earlier tragedies, but here deliberately laid aside.

Something of the romantic instinct may be recognised in this departure from the strictly classical type. The same instinct, under another and more disputable shape, had appeared in the classical tragedies themselves. If it be an essential quality of the classical spirit that the artist stands aloof from his work and does not allow his own passions and convictions to enter into it, then Alfieri can never be said to have complied with the classical conditions. Far from it. In most of his plays the personal convictions of the man, in particular his "fierce and furious hatred of all forms of tyranny," force themselves to the surface, and may almost be called the ruling inspiration of the whole. This, doubtless, reduces the weaker samples—*Virginia*, for instance, and *La Congiura de' Pazzi*—to the level of an academical exercise. But, in happier moments, it serves to sharpen the poet's dramatic instinct; it quickens him to draw the utmost that can be drawn from characters with whom, either by attraction or repulsion, he is thoroughly in accord. And it gives a fire and fury to his portraiture which more dispassionate methods could hardly have attained.

Subordinate to the classical.

Yet, with all these abatements, the general effect of his dramas remains decisively classical. And the romantic critics of the next generation were justified in fixing a great gulf between his aims and theirs.[1] They may have laid too great a

[1] See a striking essay by Mazzini, *Del Dramma Storico* (1830). *Opere*, ii. 198-272.

stress on the mere accessories of that difference; upon the lack of "local colouring" and historical setting. But behind these externals there lies the crucial distinction that while the romantic drama, when true to itself, attempts to paint human character as moulded by the outward circumstances and accidents of life, the classical dramatists, and among them Alfieri, work by a rigid process of selection. They confine themselves to the circumstances which are part and parcel of the situation taken for the theme of the dramatic story. They set themselves to render only the inmost and most essential qualities of the soul. Their method is more severe, more concentrated, more abstract, than that of romance. And this severity of method is the first thing to strike us in Alfieri. His stage is a purely ideal stage, with nothing to mark that it is built in one place rather than another. His characters are purely ideal characters; stripped not merely of the costume which belongs to this or that particular age, but of the very clothing which, from long custom, we have come to regard as man's second nature; spiritual gladiators, who descend into the lists, prepared to smite down all who venture to cross the path of their passionate wickedness or no less passionate virtue. Of all classical dramatists he is the most unflinching; perhaps, also, the most typical.

His Comedies.

It is by his tragedies that Alfieri lives. Tragedy, however, was far from being the only field of his energies. Translations, critical theories, lyrics, sonnets, satires — the best known of which is *Il Misogallo* (1792-99), a furious diatribe against the "tiger-apes" of the Revolution, in

mingled prose and verse—flowed in abundance from his pen. But the only writings, not tragical, on which it is necessary to dwell are the comedies and the autobiography, both of which belong to his closing years (1800-3). The former are by no means so well known as they deserve to be; the fame of the tragedies has probably stood in their light. One only—*Il Divorzio*, a lively satire on the Cicisbeo and other matrimonial institutions of Italy—deals with the ordinary themes of comedy. Another, *La Finestrina*, is a piece of pure fantasy. The remaining four —they are rather, as the author says, "one divided into four," *L'Uno*, *I Pochi*, *I Troppi*, *L'Antidoto*—are in the nature of political satire. And it is clear that Aristophanes, whose *Frogs* had been among the translations of the preceding years, was the model that the author had before his eyes. The themes of the first three are taken from classical story. Monarchy is ridiculed in the tale of Darius, his horse and his handy groom; aristocracy in a merciless burlesque of the Gracchi, Cornelia with the worst grace in the world receiving a morning call from an upstart heroine of finance, while Tiberius rehearses an oration before a looking-glass, to the accompaniment of a flute. Democracy is blasted in an equally contemptuous travesty of Demosthenes at the court of Alexander in Babylon. The concluding piece, the least successful of the four, shifts the scene from classical ground to a nameless island in the Orkneys; and the treatment is no less fanciful than the setting. It is only with the moral that we return to solid earth; and

the plunge is abrupt. The "antidote" to the three "poisons" is found in constitutional monarchy, so artfully tempered as to neutralise all their deadly qualities and, by a stroke of the wand, convert them into blessings. The allegory is uncommonly clumsy; and Alfieri is more at home in his classical burlesques. Whether it is legitimate to lay profane hands on memories so stately, is another question. But that once granted, the skill, the striking originality of the writer, can hardly be denied. And his own defence of his method is ingenious enough. "My century," he writes, "had set itself to fish tragedy out of comedy. . . . I struck into just the opposite path and sought to draw comedy out of tragedy; a task which appears to me more useful, more amusing, and more sound. For the great often make us laugh; while no bourgeois —banker, lawyer, or the like—ever excited our admiration. And the buskin fits ill upon a dirty foot."[1] A characteristic hit at those beneath him in rank; an equally characteristic assertion of classical principles against the most cherished invention of the earlier phases of romance.

His autobiography.

The autobiography is a more unquestioned achievement. The portraiture, both direct and indirect, is one of the most striking upon record. The set picture is drawn with the fewest and the boldest strokes. And, unconsciously, the character of the poet reveals itself on every page in vivid phrases of scorn or admiration for the actions, of graphic description for the scenes, among which

[1] *Vita*, Ep. iv., cap. 29.

his lot was cast. Nothing could be more stirring than the story of his duel with Lord Ligonier in Green Park; or his escape from Paris, after the 10th of August, with the Countess of Albany. Apart from such incisive portrayal of character and incident, the chief value of the *Vita* lies in the luminous account which it gives of the manner of his working,—an account more minute, though from the nature of the case less exciting, than Cellini's description of the casting of *Perseus;* as, indeed, in more ways than one the life of the poet recalls that of the boisterous sculptor. And it is a significant tribute to the prevalent tendencies of his age that the supreme champion of classical ideals should, in the last work of his life, have followed in the steps of Rousseau, the father of romance.

Consult the following, among other works: Petit de Julleville, *Histoire de la Langue et de la Littérature française* (8 vols., 1896-99); Hettner, *Litteraturgeschichte* (as before); Grimm, *Correspondance littéraire* (17 vols., 1813-14); Brandes, *Hovedströmningr* (as before); Chateaubriand, *Mémoires d'Outre-tombe* (12 vols., 1849-50); Madame de Staël, *Dix Années d'Exil* (1818); Sainte-Beuve, *Causeries du Lundi* (15 vols., v.d.), *Portraits de Femmes, Portraits littéraires* (3 vols.); Brunetière, *Études critiques* (6 vols., v.d.); Béclard, *Sébastien Mercier* (vol. i., 1903); Texte, *J.-J. Rousseau et les Origines du Cosmopolitisme littéraire* (1895); Jusserand, *Shakespeare en France* (1898); Morse Stephens, *Orators of the French Revolution* (2 vols., 1892); *Storia Letteraria d'Italia,* scritta da una Società di Professori (7 vols., 1900-6); Sismondi, *De la Littérature du Midi de l'Europe* (4 vols., 1813); Bouterwek, *Geschichte der Poesie und Beredsamkeit seit dem Ende des 13^en Jahrhunderts* (vol. iii.—English translation, 2 vols., 1823); Alfieri, *Vita, scritta da esso* (1804); *Biographie Universelle* (85 vols., 1811-62); *Nouvelle Biographie Générale* (46 vols., 1853-66).

CHAPTER IV.

OTHER COUNTRIES.

SPAIN: CLASSICAL TRADITION, AND REVOLT AGAINST IT—SENTIMENTAL COMEDY—TRAGEDY—LA HUERTA—PORTUGAL—GREECE—HUNGARY—NETHERLANDS—CLASSICISM: BILDERDIJK—ROMANCE: FEITH—E. WOLFF AND A. DEKEN—DENMARK AND NORWAY—BAGGESEN: PREVALENTLY CLASSICAL—ROMANCE: WESSEL, EWALD—OEHLENSCHLÄGER—SWEDEN—SLAV COUNTRIES—POLAND—FRENCH INFLUENCE—NATIONALISM: IN POLITICS—IN LITERATURE—BOHEMIA—JOSEPH II.—NATIONAL REVIVAL—RUSSIA—CATHERINE II.—PERSECUTION OF NOVIKOV—DRAMA: COMEDY—TRAGEDY—NOVEL—CONCLUSION.

With Italy all that is vital in the literature of the period may be said to end. In dealing with the remaining countries no more is possible, nor perhaps desirable, than to indicate the main currents of thought and feeling, the general drift of literary activity, in each. We turn first to the two Latin countries which still stand over—to Spain and Portugal.

Spain: classical tradition, and revolt against it.

In Spain, as elsewhere, the interest of the period centres round the revolt, timid indeed but yet clearly perceptible, against the classical tradition. During the first half of the eighteenth century that tradition had tightened its

hold upon the land of Lope and Calderon. A French dynasty was on the throne; and this must have strengthened the tendency, so pronounced throughout Europe, to bow down before the ideals embodied in the "great age" of French literature. In lyric poetry, no doubt, the national tradition still lingered; and the old national forms — Quintillas, Letrillas, and the rest — were again brought into use by Nicolas Moratin and others after the middle of the century. But the life has gone out of them—here, as wherever the classical spirit prevailed, things being unpropitious to lyric inspiration. Nor can it be said that, even in the last quarter of the century, the outlook greatly brightened; though the lyrics of Melendez Valdes (1754-1817), of which the first volume was published in 1785, are generally both sincere in feeling and graceful in expression.[1] Of the novel not even so much can be reported. The revival of this form had in other countries been among the chief signs of the romantic movement. Alike in England, France, and Germany, the publication of a novel—*Clarissa*, *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, *Werther* —had marked some of the most memorable dates in the earlier phases of romance. The same thing, though at a much later period, is true of Italy. But in Spain, which in the preceding century had created a new type in this matter—a type whose influence, as we have seen, was still potent even upon Goethe,—

[1] E.g., *Al Viento*, *La Noche de Invierno*, *La Tarde*, and, in a different vein, *A las Estrellas*. All these show the influence of Thomson.

invention seems to have run dry. During the whole of our period, as well as that which preceded it, not a single novel of note was produced. Perhaps the most memorable work, apart from the drama, achieved during this period was the revival of the fable. This is bound up with the name of Iriarte (1750-1791), whose *Fabulas Literarias* were published in 1782. It was round the drama, however, that the main battle of the period was waged. It was here that the power of France, of the classical tyranny, was most strongly entrenched. It was here that the sharpest efforts were made to dislodge it. By the middle of the century the triumph of the classical drama was tolerably complete. Classical tragedies were composed in abundance;[1] the old national drama, the brilliant creation of Lope and Calderon, had fallen into discredit; the still more characteristic *Autos Sacramentales* had been prohibited.[2] But the natural instincts of the Spaniard were too strong to allow such usurpation to pass unchallenged. And the line of attack, as might have been predicted, was twofold. On the one hand, weapons of offence were drawn from the armoury of France herself. Tragedy, as conceived by Corneille or Racine, gave way before

[1] The earliest of these seems to have been the *Cinna* of San Juan (1713); and the *Virginia* of Montiano (1750) may be said to mark the classical triumph. Even Cañizares (1676-1760), the last of the old race of dramatists, bowed to the classical fashion in *Iphigenia* and other tragedies. The tragedies of Cienfuegos (1764-1809), e.g., *Zoraida*, are perhaps the most consistently classical produced in our period.

[2] In 1764, at the instigation of the Archbishop of Toledo. See La Huerta, *La Escena Hespañola Defendida*, p. 43 (ed. Madrid, 1786).

the sentimental *drama* of Diderot and Sedaine. On the other hand, the whole theory of classical tragedy was violently assailed, the superiority of the national theatre vigorously asserted.[1] This, no doubt, was rather a matter of theory than of practice; an affair of the critics rather than the playwrights. But the revulsion of feeling made itself felt even upon the stage. And, however much the classical form might be retained, there was a marked tendency to adopt themes drawn from the national history and handled, so far as possible, in the national spirit. In the former line of assault, the leading figure was Jovellanos. In the latter, the heat of the day was borne by La Huerta; though here too Jovellanos, and with him the elder Moratin, did conspicuous service.

Sentimental comedy.

Jovellanos (1744-1811), who was honourably distinguished in public life as well as in literature, was, when it so pleased him, a sentimentalist of the first water. And of all "comédies larmoyantes," *El Delincuente Honrado* (1774), his one effort in that direction, is the most effusive. The plot, like that of *Le Philosophe sans le savoir*, turns upon a duel; and, by an ingenious aggravation of circumstances, the virtuous criminal has married the wife of the man he had slain, and is condemned to death by his own father. Neither wife nor father, it need hardly be said, is aware of the criminal's identity until their action is irrevocable; and the discovery plunges both into despair. A pardon, however, arrives as the

[1] We may further notice the sparkling burlesques (Sainetes) of Ramon de la Cruz (1731-1798 ?), e.g., *Manolo*.

victim mounts the scaffold; and the piece ends in embraces and tears of joy. Both sentiment and incidents are likely to strike the modern reader as rather cheap; and by far the best thing in the play is the ingenuous selfishness of the wife's father. But the importance of such works often lies quite apart from their intrinsic merits. And this play, like so many others of our period, is significant as a protest —a protest, in this instance, against the attempt to force the intellectual regularities of French tragedy upon the more fantastic and emotional imagination of the Spaniard.

Tragedy.

Hardly less marked is the work of Jovellanos and his associates in the field of tragedy itself. The French model, no doubt, is taken as the framework. And Jovellanos goes so far as to accept Horace's precept, "Vos exemplaria Græca," with the substitution of "French" for "Greek." But, here again, he turns the weapons of the French against themselves, and appeals to the example of De Belloy to justify the adoption of a theme drawn from the history of his own nation. The theme in question is *Pelayo* (written 1769, published 1773), a romantic incident taken from the life of the great patriot. The intention, it must be confessed, is better than the performance. For the play is frigid. And not even the romantic accessories of the last act — a single combat, "coram populo," between Pelayo and his Moorish adversary, and the treacherous murder of the latter in the course of the duel — are able to give it warmth. The same

subject, under another name (*Hormesinda*), was taken almost at the same time (1770) by the elder Moratin (1737-1780). But he throws himself into it with far greater zest; he approaches more nearly to the form and methods of the national drama; and his appeal to the national feeling is far more stirring and direct.[1] All this is the more remarkable when we consider that, in the rest of his works, the author stood as the avowed champion of French ideals; and that his other tragedy, *Lucrecia*, is impeccably classical, both in method and effect.

La Huerta.

With La Huerta (1734-1787) we come into much closer quarters with the spirit of revolt. This is doubtless more true of his critical than his creative work. *Raquel* (1778), the one important sample of the latter, has commonly been reckoned among the classical tragedies of the time. It is written in blank verse, and the unities are observed with pedantic rigour. On the other hand, its subject is drawn from the history of mediæval Castille, and it is full both of Spanish sentiment and romantic passion. The theme, the infatuation of the Christian monarch for a beautiful Jewess,[2] recalls that of *Lust's Dominion* or *Titus*

[1] It is written in iambics with irregular rhymes, as against the blank verse of *Pelayo*. The head of the Moorish prince is paraded in triumph on a pike, an incident which recalls certain crudities of *La Cisma de Inglaterra* or *El Medico de su Honra*. And the lyric element is represented by a chorus, which appears, however, only at the close.

[2] The subject had been taken by more than one earlier poet—*e.g.*, Ulloa y Pereira, in the reign of Philip IV. See Quintana, *Tesoro del Parnaso Español*, p. 375.

Andronicus. And it is hard to believe that the lament of Alfonso over the lot of kings was not inspired by Shakespeare.[1] Violent though it is, *Raquel* is the most striking, as it is on the whole the most romantic, of the tragedies produced during this period. And it prepares us for the whole-hearted defence of the national drama with which the life of the author was to close. This consisted in a collection of national plays, rather curiously omitting those of Lope de Vega, published in 1785, and accompanied by a preface in which the author stands forth as champion of the Spanish drama against the world. He had been stung to the quick by the assaults of Voltaire and others upon his favourite writers. And he at once proceeds to carry the war into the quarters of the enemy; to accuse Voltaire of "ineptitude, dishonest manœuvres, and gross ignorance" in his arguments, of "improbability, prolixity, and irrelevance" in his own most famous performances.[2] The cry raised by the Frenchman against the historical inaccuracies of Calderon is a "mere triviality"; which, if it were worth while, might be hurled back with at least equal force against the writings of Milton, and of the French

[1] Other, and more certain, traces of English influence are to be found in Melendez Valdes, Jovellanos, and Escoiquiz. The first had fed upon Thomson, and wrote a *Caida de Luzbel*, clearly suggested by Milton. The second translated the first book of *Paradise Lost*. The last, notorious as the dupe of Napoleon, translated both *Paradise Lost* (1814) and Young's *Night Thoughts* (1797).

[2] *La Escena Hespañola* (ed. 1786), pp. 59, 84, 96-101. *Zaïre* is the main object of attack.

themselves.[1] It is true that the Spanish drama defies those "rigid and purely conventional rules which the French observe as though they were revealed among thunders and lightnings from Parnassus." But its finest examples "have more genius, more invention, more charm, in a word higher poetry, than all the correct productions of the foreigner."[2] And, whereas the editor of the *Théâtre Français* has asserted that "Racine has more genius than all the Spanish dramatists put together," La Huerta is disposed to agree with those Spanish critics who had claimed for Calderon a superiority over "the united forces of the French, the Italians, and the English."[3] It could have been wished that the "defence" had gone more closely into particulars. But enough is said to show the lie of the ground, and to remind us that the revolt against classical canons, which had disturbed the last days of Voltaire, found a resounding echo in the one land which could boast of a drama absolutely indigenous and spontaneous in its growth. The cause which La Huerta pleads in the preface was greatly strengthened by the main body of his book. And the same work was carried forward by the younger Moratin (1760-1828), whose labours on the origins of the Spanish drama, a performance of great value, were not, however, published till long after his death (1850). The son, like the father, was torn in two directions; and the bulk of his life was devoted to the translation

[1] *La Escena Hespañola*, pp. 107-110.
[2] Ib., pp. 147, 148. [3] Ib., pp. 140, 141.

of French masterpieces and the pursuit of classical ideals. The stormy and disastrous reign of Charles IV. (1788-1808) was not favourable to literature. Spain, whether at war with the Revolution or dragged at the chariot-wheels of Napoleon, had other things to think of. And, with La Huerta, we must leave her literature for that of Portugal.

Portugal.

The literary activity of Portugal during this period was considerably less than that of Spain. There were the regulation epics, *Lisbõa Reedificada* (by Ramalho, 1784), and others; a burlesque epic, *Gaticanea* (by Carvalho, 1781); and a classical tragedy, which was hailed as a marvel on its first appearance, but is, in fact, of the dreariest regularity—*Osmia*, by Cattarina de Sousa (1788). More original is a collection of ironical sonnets and satirical sketches —the latter in Quintillas and other national metres —by Tolentino de Almeida (1801), who may be regarded as a faint anticipation of Béranger. But the most distinctive work of the period was perhaps that done by Correa Garcão, who, together with Pindaric and Horatian odes, produced two comedies—*Theatro Novo* and *Assemblea*—the one on a literary, the other on a social theme, and both distinguished by lively dialogue and pointed presentment of the subject. The former is, for our purposes, the more significant of the two. It is prompted by bitter indignation at the "deep sea of ignorance" with which the drama of Portugal was at this time overwhelmed, and invokes the great names of the past, Ferreira and Miranda, for a return to a better—and, above all,

a more national — tradition. In this connection, it is worth while to mention an essay, *Historia Critica do Theatro*, by Antonio de Araujo (1779), which contains an interesting, though somewhat timid, attack upon French tragedy, its disposition to sacrifice everything either to love or to "bello espirito," and its bondage to "the rules," which have "done little or nothing" for imaginative art, while they have "chilled the fire of creative genius, or imposed shackles on its freedom." From these things it is clear that, in Portugal as in the sister country, a feeling of discontent with classical ideals was fermenting in the more thinking minds. And the same thing appears in the translations from more or less romantic models in which the period abounds: *Télémaque*, Schönaich's *Hermann*, Gessner's *Abel*, Young's *Revenge*, *Alexander's Feast*, and the Odes and *Elegy* of Gray.

Greece.

In the Eastern Peninsula, where all life had been crushed out by the oppression of the Turk, only the faintest signs of approaching dawn are to be traced. Yet even here the dry bones had begun to stir. In Greece no revival was conceivable which should not begin with a return to the great memories of the past. And it was almost inevitable that this should be carried out in the first instance with something of pedantry. An attempt was made to restore not only the spirit but the very language of ancient Greece; and, had this succeeded, an impassable gulf would from the first have been fixed between the new literature and

all that could give it vitality and value. We should have had a succession of *Porsons* and *Gaisfords*, but nothing more. Coraes, the leading figure in the first generation of the revival, has sometimes been credited with sharing this delusion. In reality, he was fully alive to the claims of the spoken language; and, though his natural bias was towards the ancients, he must be regarded as taking a middle course between the extremists of either side; as having, on the whole, marked out the path which the literary language of modern Greece was to follow. More than that: in the numerous editions of the ancients which form the monument of his energy, there is a marked leaning, particularly in his earlier years, towards those writings which had most deeply affected the development of modern—we may almost say, of romantic—literature; the *Characters* of Theophrastus (1799), the romances of Longus (1802) and Heliodorus (1804), the Fables of Æsop (1810), and, it may perhaps be added, the *Lives* of Plutarch (1826). The next generation was to see a new birth of the creative spirit.

Hungary.

Passing from the southern to the western end of the Turkish frontier, we come to Hungary. And here the signs of a new life are more plainly marked. In the middle of the century the French influence was dominant, and it was reinforced by a strong current of directly Latin influence, which the use of Latin for certain official purposes had perhaps tended to confirm. Hence, in addition to translations of Virgil and Horace, we find classical metres, hexameters and elegiacs, imported, and Horatian Odes and

Epistles freely imitated. At the same time, however, there was a marked reaction towards themes drawn from the national life, past and present. Horvath produced an Epic on John Huniades (1787), Dugonics and Gvadanyi wrote romances on Magyar subjects —the former, *Etelka* (1787), the latter, *The Village Notary* (1790-96) and *Adventures of Pal Ronto and Count Benyowski.* The revival of lyric poetry is dated from the appearance of Kisfaludy's *Kesergö szerelem* (Unhappy Love) in 1801.

From the south-east we pass to the extreme north-west, to the Teutonic countries on the shores of the North Sea and the Baltic.

Netherlands.

In the literature of the Netherlands there is little that, for our purpose, it is necessary to record. The Dutch either still clung to the classical tradition, or had moved from it no farther than the sentimental phase of the romantic revival. The former tendency is represented by Bilderdijk, the most accomplished literary artist of the period; the latter by Feith and by the two friends, Elizabeth Wolff and Agatha Deken.

Classicism: Bilderdijk.

Bilderdijk (1756-1831) was indefatigable alike in translations and original work. Epics, lyrics, dramas, versions, and adaptations flowed freely from his pen; and never so freely as during the last twenty years of his life. His lyric poetry is, from the nature of the case, less affected by classical tradition than the rest of his work. His expression is always graceful, sometimes truly poetical. And in

some of his pieces — *Uitvaart*, for instance, in his last volume, *Naklang* (1827) — he strikes a note of deep feeling, to which he is otherwise a stranger. His unfinished epic, *De Ondergang der eerste Wareld* (1809), is one of the numerous poems which, from the time of Du Bartas onwards, were drawn from the Bible. The subject is much the same as Byron's *Heaven and Earth;* but Bilderdijk had neither the feeling nor the imagination which enabled Byron to give life to so perilous a theme, and his epic machinery is against him. In his translations we are more directly confronted with his classical bias. Two of his plays, *Edipus Koning* and *De Dood von Edipus* (1777-89), are versions of Sophocles; much of his love-poetry — e.g., *Mijne Verlustiging* (1788) —is adapted from Anacreon and other classical writers; his versions of *Ce qui plaît aux Dames*, *L'Homme des Champs*, and the *Essay on Man* show him as an equally faithful disciple of the classical renaissance. And it is something of a shock to find that he also turned his head to the romantic Ossian (*Fingal*, 1805). On the whole, however, his tastes are markedly classical. He considered Shakespeare to be "childish"; and he set his face from the first against the influence of the Germans,—that is, of Klopstock and the youthful Goethe, with his numerous copyists.

Romance: Feith.

The apostle of the German cult was Feith (1753-1813); and the chief oracles he consulted were Klopstock and Miller, the author of a lachrymose romance—*Siegwart*—which was one of the numerous progeny begotten by *Werther*. His chief

efforts in the former vein are *Het Graf* (1792) and *De Ouderdom* (1803); in the latter, *Julia* (1783) and *Ferdinand en Constantia* (1785). He also wrote tragedies, classical in form, sentimental in spirit, such as *Johanna Gray* (1791) and *Ines de Castro* (1794), which seem to mark the influence of De Belloy and Lemierre, or *Mucius Cordus* (1795), which is plainly indebted to Joseph Chénier. All this brought him under the lash of Kinker (1764-1845), who joined hands with Bilderdijk to burlesque both the novels and ballads of Feith in *Post van den Helicon* (1788-89), and who subsequently wrote a series of parodies on *Gabrielle de Vergy* and other foreign or native efforts to romanticise the stage. So far as the novels are concerned, the satire was deserved; but the satirists rather weakened than strengthened their case by extending it to the drama.

E. Wolff and A. Deken.

Sentimentalism takes a healthier shape in the joint work of Elizabeth Wolff (1737-1804) and Agatha Deken (1741-1804). Their chief novel—and all their best work was done in this field—is *Sara Burgerhart* (1782). The plan of the book, and much of its spirit, are manifestly drawn from Richardson. But the writers have thoroughly succeeded in transplanting their English tree into Dutch soil; and the novel presents us with a series of native scenes and portraits which remind us that we are in the land of Rembrandt and Gérard Douw. The claim put in by the title-page —"Not a translation"— is abundantly justified; and the reversion to daylight after a long spell

of Arcadian moonshine—*e.g.*, Heemskerk's *Batavische Arcadia* (1647)—is significant. The triumph of *Sara*, whose popularity spread far beyond her own country, encouraged the authors to further efforts of the same kind—*Willem Leevend* (1784-85) and *Cornelia Wildschut* (1793-96). In later years the two friends fell upon troubled times, partly owing to their political faith, which drove them to take refuge in France from the triumphant Orange party (1788); partly owing to the loss of all their money by the failure of their banker (1798). They returned to their native country, now under a "patriot" government, for the close, and died, as they had hoped might be granted to them, within a few days of each other.

Denmark and Norway.

Denmark[1] presents a much richer field of literary talent, and reflects the successive tendencies of the period with marked fidelity: rationalism and the later classicism on the one hand, on the other the dawn of the romantic revival. With rationalism, as such, we are hardly concerned. How widely it prevailed may be seen from the fact that Bastholm, perhaps the most extreme member of the school, was court chaplain during the greater part of the period (1782 onwards). And, as the temper of rationalism has never been imaginative, it is the more significant that the poetic revival should have followed so soon and won its way so quickly.

[1] With Denmark, Norway must be included, the two being united under the same crown. Of the writers mentioned in the text, Brun and Wessel were Norwegians, the remainder Danes.

Baggesen: prevalently classical.

The tenacity of the classical tradition touches us more closely, and is mainly bound up with the fame of Baggesen (1764-1826). In his own sphere, Baggesen was a really great writer; and it would be an injustice to suppose that he is to be described by any one term, however convenient or however venerable. But it remains true that he was, on the whole, under the influence of the classical spirit, and that his poetic master, a master whose teaching was never entirely forgotten, was Voltaire. He excels in the half-bantering, half-serious vein, so fruitfully worked by his French model.[1] In not a few of his poems[2] he even attempts the more solemn strain, which was deliberately avoided by Voltaire except in his avowedly philosophical pieces. It may be doubted, however, whether Baggesen is ever entirely successful either in this field or in that of the rather thin and obvious sentiment to which he sometimes resorted. Certainly, he is more at home in the lighter species of poetry; above all, in satire, in discharging airy shafts against literary heretics. And it is curious that his skill lies largely in the use which he makes of their romantic trappings; in adroitly seizing, as ornaments for his own verse, the very things which he ridicules in that of his opponents. The best example of this is probably his Epistle to Oehlenschläger, *Noureddin til Aladdin*,[3] in which the oriental bazaar of the younger poet is ransacked to trick out the half-ironical compli-

[1] E.g., *Emma* and *Orpheus og Eurydice*, of his earlier poems, *Værker*, t. i.

[2] E.g., *Balders Graad*. Ib., t. vii., p. 304.

[3] Ib., t. v., p. 121.

ments of the elder (1806). Later, Noureddin's hostility deepened, and found vent in carping reviews of Aladdin's romantic dramas.[1] Aladdin, who had winced under the friendly irony of the epistle, bitterly resented the direct assault of the reviews. In this unedifying wrangle, each poet took the other's name in vain; the elder addressing the younger as Schlegelschläger, while the younger retorted by ringing the changes on the first syllable of his adversary's surname. The dispute is mainly important as serving to fix the position of Baggesen, whose antipathy to romance stiffened perceptibly in the course of it, and who ended by assuming the airs of a legislator of Parnassus. In this respect also, the analogy with Voltaire was destined to hold good. It should be added that Baggesen, at any rate in his earlier days, was master of excellent prose; and that his *Labyrinthen*,[2] or early letters from abroad (1789-91), are full of a fire and vividness which he would seem of set purpose to have excluded from his poetry.

Romance: Wessel, Ewald.

In the romantic revival the leading figures are Wessel (1742-1785), Ewald (1743-1781), and Oehlenschläger (1779-1850). The main activity of the two former falls before our period; that of the last, after its conclusion. Wessel is chiefly memorable for his *Kjærlighed uden Strömper* (1772), — an amusing burlesque on the *Zarine* of Brun and other classical tragedies, which may be taken to mark at once the persistence of the classical tradition and the first step in the reaction

[1] *Værker*, t. viii., pp. 21-190. [2] Ib., t. ii.-iv.

against it. The two others were more ambitious. Ewald, who throughout was strongly influenced by Klopstock, began his serious work with a half lyrical drama on the Temptation, *Adam og Eva*. It is, however, in his next effort, *Rolf Krage* (1770), that he first definitely ranges himself with the romantic revolt. His subject is drawn from the heroic legends of his nation; his play is written in prose which recalls, however imperfectly, the massive style of the old sagas. It is true that he makes his bow to classical prejudice by strict observance of the unities; it is also true that the piece is unduly laden with modern sentiment. But it would be unjust to forget that this was the first attempt which any country had made to draw upon the golden stores of the legendary past; and that Europe had to wait for at least a generation before the attempt was anywhere renewed. Ewald himself, however, repeated the attempt three years later — and this time with less questionable success — in his musical tragedy, a tolerably complete anticipation of Wagnerian opera, *Balders Död*. Here, it need hardly be said, prose is rejected for verse; the blank verse, which forms the groundwork, having strength as well as melody, and some of the lyrics flowing with a truly admirable lilt.[1] What is yet more important, the sentiment, though it still bears marks of the "age of feeling," is far more in harmony with the subject than was

[1] *E.g.*, the song of the Valkyries, which would seem to have been inspired by the fairies' song in *Midsummer Night's Dream*, "Over hill, over dale."

the case with the preceding drama. With another musical piece, *Fiskerne* (1778-80), the short and unhappy life of the poet came to a close.

Oehlenschläger.

Oehlenschläger is a more striking figure. A thorough-paced "romantic," he was the avowed disciple of Tieck and the Schlegels; but—thanks, perhaps, in part to his admiration of Schiller and, still more, of Goethe — he bettered the instruction of his masters. In the romantic movement of the Continental Teutons he is what Coleridge was in England, or Hugo in France. From some of the more questionable qualities of his German models he cannot claim to have escaped. He shares their love of effect, their restless search of it in the most diverse quarters. *Konunga Sögur*, the Gospels, the *Arabian Nights*—all was fish that came to his net. These blemishes, however, play a far smaller part in the Danish poet than in his German masters. And his poetry is, in the main, free from the artificiality, the affectation, and the vagueness which are the distinguishing marks of theirs. Their outlines are blurred, his are clear cut; their melody is exotic, his springs from the inmost genius of the language; their subjects are far-fetched; his, like the golden horn of which he sings in one of his earliest pieces,[1] drawn by preference

[1] Contained in his earliest work, *Digte* (1803). Other poems drawn from the same vein, during the years immediately following, are *Vaulundurs Saga*, *Baldur hin Gode*, a tragedy, and *Thors Rejse til Jothunhejm*, an epic; all published in *Nordiske Digte*, together with *Hakon Jarl*, in 1807. *Aladdin* (1805) is the one work of importance, during these years, taken from a different source.

from the depths of the soil. The last is, perhaps, the most striking characteristic of his work. He had the genius to see the inexhaustible treasures which lay ready to be quarried in the mine of Norse legend; and, in a temper not entirely unworthy of the older masters, he fashioned the heroic past to the service of the present. The finest examples of this gift—both the ballad and the subsequent drama composed on *Hakon Jarl* (1803-7)—show a power of striking home to the heart of a dramatic action which is rare at all times, and which was utterly unknown to Schlegel or Tieck. This is particularly true of the ballad, where the dramatic movement of the action is echoed by the stirring beat of the rhythm, with an instinctive harmony which only a true poet could have achieved. The rhythm, moreover, though it recalls that of Schiller, has a richer music than Schiller was commonly able to attain. The later work of Oehlenschläger lies beyond our limits. It was continued, in the most various directions, till close upon his death.[1]

Sweden.

In Sweden the general trend of literary effort was much the same as in other countries; with this difference, that the turn of the tide came considerably later, and that its force was much weaker than was elsewhere commonly the case. During the first half of our period the classical fashion reigned undisputed; and its chief champion

[1] His *Erindringr*, the work on which he was engaged at the time of his death, contains, among other things, some lively recollections of Goethe (1806-9).

was the "Opera King," Gustav III., founder of the Academy (1786), and himself the author of several pieces, inspired by French enlightenment and carried out on the most approved models of French taste. His first lieutenant in promoting the French cult was Kellgren (1751 - 1795), author among other things of *Atis and Camilla*, and editor of the *Stockholmspost*, the chief organ of encyclopedic and classical ideas (founded 1778). It was, as so often, from France that the first impulse to revolt against French ideals was immediately drawn. And it was in the name of Rousseau, whose influence was perhaps nowhere so strong as here, that the ideals of Voltaire and d'Alembert were gradually overthrown. The most notable figures connected with the dawn of this revolt are those of Thorild (1759-1808) and Lidner (1757-1793). And that of Franzén (1772-1847) may perhaps be added. Thorild stands for the more abstract side of the reforming movement. It was chiefly through his paper, *The New Examiner* (founded 1784), that he made himself felt; and, on the whole, he is more of a critic than a creative artist. A bitter opponent of the existing order both in literature and politics, he ran violently athwart the king, whom he lampooned as a "puny rhymester"; and, in the reaction which followed his adversary's assassination (1792), he was banished as an incendiary. He is above all a champion of freedom and a child of nature; in the latter character, his distinguishing mark is a love of war and the martial memories of his country, such as might not unnatur-

ally spring from Rousseau's doctrines, and was, in fact, forced by untoward circumstances upon the Jacobins of France. More creative, if less masculine, was the talent of Lidner. Like Thorild, he was a disciple of Rousseau; but it is the softer rather than the more rugged side of Rousseau's genius, the sympathy with suffering rather than the "burning hatred of oppression," that his poetry represents. He shows also the influence on the one hand of *Werther*, on the other of Klopstock, Young, and even Milton. Yet in some of his work—which included dramas in Alexandrines as well as lyrics and half-lyrical, half-narrative pieces—a sterner note is struck; for instance, in *Spastaras Död* and *1783*,—the one a glowing record of a mother's self-sacrifice, the other a stirring tribute to the endurance of Washington and the courage of the British garrison at Gibraltar. Franzén, a native of Finland, had from nature a more genuinely lyrical talent than either Thorild or Lidner, and great hopes were based upon his youthful poems (1792-93). But he would seem to have been daunted by criticism, and the early promise was not fulfilled till many years later. The "iron-years," with which the old century closed and the new opened, pressed heavily upon his sensitive spirit; and in the disasters which overtook Sweden under Gustav IV., a general blight appears to have fallen upon the intellectual, no less than on the practical, energies of the nation. The foundation of the *Aurorajörbund* by Atterbom and others in 1807 was the first clear sign of literary revival. It was a graft from the Romantic School of Germany.

Slav countries.

Among the Slavonic nations, with the possible exception of Russia, there are few traces of the new spirit which was astir in the more advanced of the Teutonic and Latin peoples. Such life as there was still flowed in the channels of French classicism and enlightenment. The one sign of hope lay in that return to the past, that loving study of national origins and antiquities, which here, as in England and Germany, held in it the promise of a freer and more spontaneous life to be realised in the future. Nowhere had Latin culture been a more alien influence than in these countries. Nowhere was it more needful that the national consciousness should be awakened. And this, from the nature of the case, was in the main a task for the antiquarians.

Of the two great branches of the Slavonic race—the Western and the Eastern, under which must be reckoned the Balkan communities of the South—we begin with the former. And it may be well to take Poland first, as that country which, for obvious reasons, had been most deeply penetrated by foreign influences.

Poland.

These influences are twofold, Latin and French; the former contributed by the Jesuits who, from the close of the sixteenth century, had held the whole education of the country in their grip; the latter springing out of the strong political bond which, from the same period, had existed between Poland and the leading Latin nation of the West. The Jesuit influence showed

itself chiefly in the rhetorical—not to say, inflated—style which had long been a tradition in the Order, and which reappears, if one may judge from translations, in the writings of some who raised the standard of revolt and who had themselves been trained by Jesuit masters. It is, however, only fair to add that the innovators, without exception, came from the schools of the Order; and that, in later years, they spared no pains to break down the cramping system under which they had been brought up. And, when the Order was abolished in 1773, their moment came. The charge of teaching passed to the State; and Poland was the first country in Europe to have a Ministry of Education.

French influence.

The influence of France falls more directly within our province. It had swept everything before it during the reign of August of Saxony. It was still dominant throughout the troubled days of Poniatovski (1764-1795). This was so in satire and miscellaneous poetry; witness the satires of Wegierski (1755-1787) and Trembecki (1726-1812), manifestly modelled on those of Voltaire; or the descriptive poetry of Trembecki, an apparent imitation of the Gardens of Delille. The same influence appears in the drama of the time. The tragedies of Kniaznin (1750-1807)—*Themistocles*, *Hector*, *The Spartan Mother*—are avowedly classical. The comedies of Zablocki (1754-1821), *Superstition* and others, are framed closely on the model of Molière; though in some, *The Sarmatians* for instance, an attempt is made to interweave figures

of more native growth. On the whole, the same forces are at work in the writings of Krasicki (1735-1801). These are in the last degree miscellaneous. They include translations of Plutarch and Lucian, an Encyclopædia of the Sciences (1781-82), a Satire called *Monachomachia* closely modelled upon *Le Lutrin* (1775), an Epic upon the wars against the Turk (1782) after the fashion of *La Henriade*, and a social romance, *Pan Podstoli* (1778-98), which would seem to have been his most original creation.[1] He further wrote a general history of European Poetry, in which he appears as a full-blown legislator of Parnassus. The Unities are accepted; Milton is condemned; Shakespeare is once more the drunken savage, capable of brilliant outbursts which "set him above the masters." In all these, with the one exception of *Pan Podstoli*, the influence of French classicism and French enlightenment is unmistakable.

Nationalism in politics.

A more fruitful form of the French influence appears in the disciples of Rousseau, Staszic (1755-1826) and, in a less degree, Kollataj (1750-1812). Here, however, we are on political rather than on literary ground; and the chief importance of these men lies in their strenuous effort to avert the doom which, from the date of the first Partition (1772), threatened the very existence of their country. Staszic, who had begun

[1] It may be described as a cross between *The Spectator* and *Sandford and Merton*. The virtuous magistrate discourses on Education, serfdom, shebeens, and all the other institutions of Polish life. There is a German translation, *Herr Untertruchsess*.

as the ardent follower of Rousseau, in the end proclaimed himself ready to sacrifice everything to the maintenance of national independence; and, with this object, to strengthen the hands of the king against the aristocracy and, generally, against the claims of individual liberty. These principles, which were manifestly justified by the circumstances, are put forward in two writings, *Considerations on the Life of Zamojski* (1785) and *A Warning to Poland* (1790). They were more or less completely embodied in the Constitution of 1791. But, unhappily, the intrigues of Catherine were once more allowed to prevail. The patriot Ministry, including Kollataj, who had been among the chief authors of the Constitution, basely surrendered to the aristocratic opposition (July 1792). The dismemberment and the final extinction of Poland inevitably followed (1793-95). It is a bitter reflection that British money, lavishly granted to our allies for other objects, was in fact used for this nefarious purpose.

In literature.

It is with Naruszewicz (1733-1796) that we first come upon the smack of the soil. His poems, which belong mainly to his earlier years, are full of it, in spirit if not in form—for instance, his Ode to the Portraits of the famous Poles of old, and that called *The Voices of the Dead.* Still more important is his History of the Polish People down to the accession of the House of Jagellon at the close of the fourteenth century (1774-86). This is significant for its scholarly use

of the widely scattered sources; yet more so, for the love of Poland and all things Polish which inspired it. It was the earliest appeal to the national conscience from the foreign traditions which had so long overlaid and stifled it. And, in this respect, it may be said to have prepared the way for the national revival which was the work of the next generation in the field of literature; above all, for such romantic reconstructions of the past as are to be found in the *Pan Tadeusz* of Mickiewicz. At first sight it may seem strange to attach much weight to a mere matter of antiquarian research. But no one who has realised how great was the influence of antiquarian studies upon the earlier phases of the romantic movement in England and in Germany will fail to recognise their yet greater importance in less favoured lands.

Bohemia.

With the other main branch of the Western Slavonic stock things had fared even worse. The very language of the Czechs had fallen into contempt. And here again the Jesuits, who from the Thirty Years' War onwards had been charged with the education of the country, would seem to have been the chief offenders. The publication of a new book in Czech was almost unknown; old books were systematically seized and burnt. And it is a fact which in itself speaks volumes that the very men who, at the close of the eighteenth century, set themselves to revive the study of the national language, literature, and

history, wrote for the most part either in German or in Latin.

Joseph II.

The first check to this disastrous tendency arose from causes which were designed to strengthen it. Joseph II. was the living embodiment of those abstract ideals which were at once the motive power and the most tangible result of eighteenth-century philosophy. And from the first he waged relentless war against the "particularism," and above all against the national languages, of his motley dominions. From the time of his election as Emperor (1765) all his influence was directed to this object. And with his succession to the sovereignty of the hereditary states of the house of Hapsburg (1780) his power to that end was indefinitely enlarged. As early as 1774 German was made the sole language of instruction and administration throughout Bohemia; and the Czech language and literature bade fair to be banished even from memory. But the very violence of the attack called out a resistance which was hardly to have been expected. And the next ten years saw the birth of a movement which changed the whole current of men's thoughts, alike in politics and literature.

National revival.

In the literary revival the leading figures were Dobner (1719-1790), Pelzel (1734-1801), Durich (1738-1802), K. I. Tham (1763-1816), and above all Dobrovski (1753-1829). As in Poland, the first step was to open up the knowledge of the nation's past. Dobner led the way with an edition of Hajak's Bohemian Chronicle in Latin (1764-86), to-

gether with a collection of hitherto unedited documents during the same years. Pelzel followed closely with a short History of Bohemia (1774); then with biographies of Charles IV. and Wenzel IV., and other works of historical research; finally (1791-96) with his *Nova Kronika Ceska*, down to the death of Charles IV., and a continuation to the middle of the Hussite War, which, however, remained unpublished. It is only in the last that he ventures upon Czech; all the rest are written in German. Durich published his 'Bibliotheca Slavica antiquissimæ dialecti communis universæ Slavorum gentis'—or rather, the first and only part of it—in 1793; the earliest appearance, we may say, of Panslavism in literature. Lastly, Dobrovski, who had joined Pelzel in editing *Scriptores Rerum Bohemicarum* (1782-84), and was again to do so in an original work on the principles of Czech Grammar (1795-98), took his place at the head of the whole movement with his *Geschichte der böhmischen Sprache und Litteratur*, published in 1791-92, rewritten and greatly enlarged in 1818.

The only other works to be mentioned—and in their own way they are no less significant—are Balbin's *Apology for the Czech Language*, published at Pelzel's instance in 1775, and promptly suppressed by the Government; and Tham's *Defence of the Czech Language* (1783); both of which are written in German. These, as their titles show, were a direct challenge to the repressive policy of the Government; and they serve to mark at once the bitterness of official hostility and the force of the resistance with which it

was met. From the date of Tham's treatise onwards, there was an uninterrupted stream of writings directed to the revival of the national language, history, and literature. And, in principle at least, the national cause may be said to have been won. What remained was the yet harder task of turning the victory to account; of converting the antiquarian revival into one that should touch the deeper issues of thought and imagination. The writers above mentioned had performed the task of Percy and Warton. Was there any man capable of doing for Bohemia what was done in our own country by Coleridge and Scott, and in Germany by Herder and Goethe? To this question, so far as our period is concerned, the answer is not satisfactory. An attempt was made by Wenzel Tham, younger brother of the Czech champion, to create a national theatre. But, for the most part, the writers of this generation seem to have contented themselves with the milder and more vaporous inspirations of foreign romance—the Fables of Florian, Young's *Night Thoughts*, above all the Idylls of Gessner, which found no less than four translators before the end of the century. It was not until the first quarter of the next century was nearly out that the Slav leaven began to show itself with effect—in the *Slavy Dcera* of Kollar (1821-24) and the poems (*Smisene busne*) of Celakovski (1822).

In Russia, destined to play so large a part in the literature of the next century, the signs of dawn are already perceptible. Here, as elsewhere, no doubt, the

hand of France, of the classical tradition, lay heavy upon the land. But, considering the backwardness of the nation, this was hardly so great an evil as in other countries. The choice was between an imported literature and no literature at all. In the face of a debt so heavy, it is important to distinguish the several heads of the account. And, besides the classical tradition which came in with Peter the Great (1682-1725), two later streams of French influence must be jealously held apart. The first of these, the influence of Voltaire and the Encyclopedists, fills the long reign of Catherine (1762-96). The second, that of the earlier romanticists (Rousseau, De Belloy, and others), begins to make itself felt at the turn of the century, during the troubled reign of Paul (1796-1801) and the opening years of Alexander. The latter, it need hardly be said, is the truly vital influence. It was reinforced by the advancing tide of German romanticism, immediately across the frontier. And in Russia itself it stirred memories which had long slumbered; it touched instincts which had seemed to be buried for ever beneath the exotic culture of the last century, but which, at the contact of a kindred spirit from without, and under the shock of a war for life and death within, soon sprang to a life more vigorous than ever. It is of this, and of the earlier movement towards "reason" and "enlightenment," that it is alone necessary to speak.

Russia.

Among the disciples of Voltaire, few were, or pro-

fessed to be, more ardent than "Saint Catherine."[1]

Catherine II.

From her accession she kept up a lively correspondence with the Patriarch; while both she and her heir were in constant communication with other members, more or less orthodox, of the Church: Grimm, Diderot and La Harpe. The most tangible result of this intercourse was the showy legislation, the famous *Nakaz* (Instruction), of 1767. This seemed so incendiary to the authorities of the time that it was publicly burnt in France, and eventually suppressed, by "Minerva's" order, in Russia itself. The whole thing, like Potemkin's villages, was designed for effect; and the authoress was the last person in the world to take it seriously. In her closing years she took violent alarm at the French Revolution, and the real woman came out from beneath the varnish of mildness which had imposed on her gullible preceptors. The history of Novikov (1744-1818), one of the few writers who stand out from the surrounding darkness, will serve to illustrate both sides of her character and of the period itself.

Novikov, who had begun (1773) with various works on the antiquities, "real or fictitious," of Russian hist-

Persecution of Novikov.

ory—this itself is important for its bearing on the subsequent national and romantic movement—soon passed, with some encouragement from Catherine, into journalism and the publication

[1] For Voltaire's flattery, see the Correspondence with Catherine *passim*; especially the letters of Jan. 22, 1771, Nov. 2, 1772, Dec. 11, 1772.

of books intended to spread new ideas and useful knowledge among his countrymen. In this connection he became editor of a paper with the significant name *Utrennie Svjet* (Morning Light), and of other journals, first at Petersburg, then at Moscow, where he still continued the publication of his "Library." In all his work he is a curious instance of the attempt, not uncommon during this period, to combine rationalism with mysticism. In his later years he is said to have surrendered himself entirely to the latter, and become an ardent Rosicrucian. This, however, was far in the future; and his troubles were due to a different cause. Having attacked the Jesuits, at that time under the protection of the Empress, and having drawn on himself further suspicion by various benevolent undertakings, he was placed under surveillance. The Archbishop of Moscow was charged to report upon his writings, and, though the report was favourable at least to the character and motives of the writer—"I have never known a more pious Christian,"—he was first interned in one place or another, then imprisoned, apparently under conditions of great cruelty, and not released until the accession of Paul. It is said that Catherine called for his blood. She certainly denounced him as a "revolutionary," and took every step to prevent the spread of the "French contagion." The two things which told most heavily against the unhappy man were his mystical leanings—he was closely connected both with the Freemasons and the Quakers—and his efforts to spread the doctrines of the Encyclopedists. Of the

former, the Archbishop professed himself "able to understand nothing"; he seems to have been particularly puzzled by Novikov's comments on Pascal's *Pensées* and the *Night Thoughts* of Young—a curious combination. The latter, the "French plague," he pronounced to be "pernicious"; and Catherine—who, as *ci-devant* Minerva, knew all about it—was emphatically of the same opinion. The whole story throws a strange light both on the intellectual backwardness of the country and on the enormous obstacles thrown in the way of any man who strove to reform it. And Novikov, who in his own day was boldly seconded by Lopuchin, may be fitly regarded as precursor of Ryljäev and other "Decembrists" of the next generation.

Drama: Comedy.

We turn to the other influences at work during this age of preparation—to those which have more direct bearing upon imaginative art. On the lyrical poetry of the time it is unnecessary to pause. Its chief representative, Djerjavin (1783-1816), though his work contains unexpected gleams of descriptive power, obviously reflected from the French, German, and British "poets of nature," Ossian included, is for the most part drowned in his own grandiloquence, and discharges his official task of panegyric with more than a laureate's pomposity. Like other poets of his time, moreover, he writes after the syllabic system of French prosody, which is entirely opposed to the genius of the Russian language. More promise appears in the Drama and the Novel. The former, in particular, shows signs of marked originality. And

this applies especially to Comedy. Here it is only fair to begin by acknowledging the services of Catherine, who, with all her hateful qualities of heart, had undeniably a keen and sprightly intellect. From the first she set herself to reform the drama of her adopted country and to make it an instrument of enlightenment. In collaboration with Princess Dashkov and others, she wrote comedy after comedy with this object, particularly in the early part of her reign.[1] Russian landowners, Freemasons, Cagliostro, superstition, fanaticism, Gustav III. of Sweden — these were the miscellaneous victims of her satire. All these plays were originally produced on her private stage at the Hermitage, and many of them were afterwards performed in public at Petersburg and Moscow. Such pieces, hastily improvised, could hardly make great claims to literary art; and, to do her justice, the authoress always modestly depreciated them. The period, however, produced one comedian of talent which hardly falls short of genius—Fon-Vizin, whose name betrays his German extraction (1745-1792). His two Plays, *The Brigadier* and *The Infant* (*Njedarosl*), 1766 and 1782, would have sufficed to make an epoch in the history of any theatre. They are doubtless much influenced by French comedy: one of the least happy of Molière's devices, the *Imperator ex machina*, is borrowed, for

[1] With operas, they fill four volumes of her collected works. They include adaptations from Shakespeare (*Merry Wives of Windsor*) and Calderon. She would seem to have sent some of her comedies to Voltaire. See letters of Oct. 17, 1772, and Feb. 13, 1773.

instance, to wind up the intrigue of *Njedarosl.* But the vividness with which the barbarism of the Russian squirearchy is painted, the grotesque absurdity of the hulking infant, "little Mitrophant," and the sparkle of the dialogue, are all the author's own; and it is much to be regretted that he wrote so little in this line. The path that he opened was followed, with yet greater originality, by Gribojädov and Gogol some half century later; the *Inspector* of the latter being probably the highest achievement of the Russian drama. But, on the whole, the stage has proved too narrow for the peculiar genius of the nation. It is in narrative poetry and the novel that the great writers have most fully seized both the comedy and tragedy of life, and shown the deepest knowledge of man's heart. It was not in comedy but in the novel that the greatest triumph even of Gogol was attained.

Tragedy.

Tragedy during this period can boast of no writer comparable to Fon-Vizin. Yet here, too, work of considerable talent was produced. This was by Ozerov (1775-1816), each one of whose dramas embodies some form or other of the romantic spirit. The first, *Œdipus at Athens* (1804), is avowedly modelled on the play of Ducis. The second, *Fingal*, bears on its face the influence of Ossian; while in its double chorus—of bards and priests of Odin—as well as in the violence of its action and its defiance of the Unity of Place, it departs widely enough from the classical conventions. The last, *Dmitri Donskoi* (1807), though it has been harshly treated by some of the critics, is probably the

most striking of the three. In his choice of subject—the liberation of Russia from the Tartar yoke—the author follows in the steps of De Belloy and Joseph Chénier. And, though Voltaire and Racine have left their mark upon his language, it is beyond question the romantic innovators whose influence prevails. Written under stress of the dread and hatred of Napoleon, performed exactly a month before the battle of Eylau, what wonder that this stirring drama roused the spectators to a frenzy of enthusiasm, that its fiery appeal to the memories of the past carried all before it? The Historic Drama, as we have seen, played a large part in the romantic revival; and, if we except *Charles IX.*, no drama of the kind struck home so directly to the heart of those who witnessed it as this.

It remains only to speak of the Novel; and, here again, we confine ourselves to the work of one writer.

Novel.

Karamzin (1766-1826), who was later to win fame as a historian, began with two tales, *Natalja* and *Bjednaja Liza* (1792), one of which, at any rate, sets him, at a stroke, among the masters. The former of these, the story of a girl who elopes with a young outlaw, is somewhat spoilt by the dash of jocoseness which the author chose to mingle with his sentiment. Yet, even here, the directness of the narrative and its genuine humour show considerable power. In *Bjednaja Liza*—the story of a girl's betrayal—no such abatement need be made. The humour of *Natalja* is doubtless absent; it would have been singularly out of place. But in simplicity, in pathos, in rigorous ex-

clusion of all that is not absolutely germane to the matter, this short story—it could easily be printed in thirty pages—has seldom, if ever, been surpassed. The masterpiece of Karamzin has little, or nothing, in common with the Russian novel, as it has subsequently taken shape. It belongs rather to the stock of Rousseau and Saint-Pierre.[1] But, in the larger sense, the author is not unworthy to have prepared the way for the creations of Gogol, Turgenjev, and Dostojevsky.

Conclusion.

This closes our sketch of the Romantic Revolt. During the thirty years of our period—sooner in one country, later in another—we have seen the stirrings of a new life spread from end to end of the commonwealth of Europe. Everywhere they brought a reaction against the classical conventions. Everywhere, directly or indirectly, immediately or in the long-run, they resulted in throwing the nation upon its own resources, in restoring to it the heritage of its own soil. In the Latin countries, no doubt, this process was less thoroughly carried out. For there the soil itself was steeped in classical traditions; and for the Frenchman or the Italian the escape could not be so complete as for the Teuton and the Slav. Yet even in France and Italy the old forms largely vanished, the old spirit was profoundly modified. For the Teuton, in a less degree for the Slav, these years were, in the strictest sense, a new birth. There had been nothing like it

[1] It may be added that he translated Shakespeare's *Julius Cæsar* and Lessing's *Emilia Galotti*. He was the only Russian of the time to be deeply influenced by the English and the Germans.

since the Renaissance. But, whereas the Renaissance was, in the first instance, the invasion of a foreign culture, the Romantic Revival was, except in the Latin countries, a war of liberation. Hence, in spite of a general resemblance, the marvellous variety of genius, of imaginative beauty conceived and shaped by genius, which it produced. It was a return to the soil—to the inexhaustible fertility of nature.

Consult the following, among other works: *Biographie Universelle* and *Nouvelle Biographie Générale* (as before); Ticknor, *History of Spanish Literature* (3 vols., 6th ed., 1882); Bouterwek and Sismondi (as before); Rhizos-Rhankabes, *Histoire littéraire de la Grèce moderne* (2 vols., 1877); J. ten Brink, *Geschiedenis der Nederlandsche Letterkunde* (1897); Hansen, *Illustreret Dansk Litteratur Historie* (3 vols., 2nd ed., 1902); Vedel, *Svensk Romantik* (1894); Pypin und Spasowiç, *Geschichte der Slavischen Litteraturen* (German translation, 3 vols., 1880); Pypin, *Istorija Russkoi Literatury* (4 vols., 2nd ed., 1902-3); Brückner, *Geschichte der Russischen Litteratur* (1905).

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